

Turkish Islamists fail in car bomb escape bid

ANKARA (R) — A car bomb exploded in central Turkey Friday in an apparent attempt to free eight Islamist suspects being carried to court in a prison vehicle, Anadolu News Agency (ANA) said. It said two gendarmes were wounded in the attack in the province of Kars. Other gendarmes sealed off the area and prevented the suspects from escaping, ANA said. "A bomb loaded into a car at the side of the road was set off by remote control...as the armoured prison vehicle was going past," ANA added. The prisoners were being taken to Ankara where they were to appear in a state security court on charges related to the killing of 37 people in an Islamist arson attack in 1997.

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50% of Israelis are ready for concessions

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Half of all Israelis are prepared to accept certain concessions over Jerusalem with the Palestinians a poll released Friday said. The poll, published by the Israeli daily Maariv, was conducted before the double suicide bombing on Wednesday. According to the survey, 30 per cent of Israelis said they were ready to accept Palestinian sovereignty over parts of Arab east Jerusalem, while another 21 per cent said they were in favour of shared sovereignty in the annexed sector. Out of the remainder, 22 per cent said they were willing to see a Palestinian capital on the outskirts of the city, while only 20 per cent rejected any concession over the Holy City. Seven per cent were undecided. The poll was based on a sample of 504 Jewish Israelis, with an error margin of 4.5 per cent.

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King calls on nation to stand against disunity

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Thursday called on citizens to contribute to building a model country and participate in the decision-making process and in shaping the future.

Addressing a large audience at Al al-Bait University, the King called for protecting our national unity and acting as one team in the face of any attempts to disunite the people.

The King stressed the importance of cooperation and unity in building the country and contributing to its progress. He called on the people to build on the achievements made by "the fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers." The King called for enriching Jordan's march by formulating meaningful programmes based on knowledge, awareness, honesty, patriotism, hard work and dedication.

He said the establishment of Al al-Bait University was designed to serve as an Arab and Islamic university, where researchers can search for the truth.

"We want it to rear the generations on the fear of God

and to defend Islam and our tolerant belief," the King said.

The King also said: "We want the university to prepare well-educated and self-confident generations, capable of living and adapting to a continuously developing world."

Referring to the difficulties facing the university, King Hussein said: "This is a challenge and we have all the resolve and determination to face it. Had this university been established for other objectives and goals, it would not have received support from anywhere and everywhere." The King pledged support for the university to enable it to carry out its pan-Arab and Islamic mission and achieve its objectives. The King noted that the university enjoys the full confidence of the Islamic World, saying that a large number of students from the Islamic World are attending it.

Also addressing the meeting was Mafraq Governor Ahmad Al Lawzi who reviewed the achievements made in the governorate. He said Mafraq Governorate has

seen tremendous developments in all fields, including the agriculture industry, construction, as well as infrastructure services, which altogether contributed to turning it into a centre of attraction for people in the nearby areas.

Al al-Bait University President Mohammad Adnan Al Bakhit presented the university's achievements, plans and programmes. Dr. Bakhit reviewed the work and assignments of the various departments and centres at the university, saying that their programmes are built in accordance with the community's needs. Dr. Bakhit also reviewed the university's contribution to the local community. Dr. Bakhit called for providing a plot of land to build a housing estate for university scholars, and stressed the dire need for providing drinking water.

The meeting was attended by Acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, the King's advisor for tribal affairs, General Hameidi Al Fayez, Cabinet ministers and deputies from the Mafraq Governorate.

Netanyahu turns screws on Arafat Palestinian police chief says if Israel comes after him to Gaza or elsewhere 'they will not return'

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has turned the screws on Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to crack down on militants in the wake of twin suicide attacks in Jerusalem.

The Israeli leader suspended peace talks, launched a wave of arrests, confined Palestinians to their home districts and threatened to re-enter Palestinian National Authority (PNA)-ruled areas to seize "terrorists" if Mr. Arafat refused.

Mr. Arafat's aides called the moves a "declaration of war" and said they would only crush Palestinian hopes of peace.

In Washington, members of U.S. President Bill Clinton's Middle East advisory team converged on the White House to discuss how to advance tattered Middle East peace efforts.

A senior State Department official who asked not to be identified said a first official Middle East trip for Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was "an option under consideration."

The pair of human bombs who killed 13 people and wounded 170 at a Jerusalem's main Jewish street market Wednesday challenged the Israeli leader with the worst civilian carnage in his 13-month tenure.

Mr. Netanyahu accused Mr. Arafat of having done "damning" to tackle violence and said the international community had an obligation to demand action from the Palestinian president.

"You, Mr. Arafat...you freed murderers. You yourself incited 'jihad, jihad, jihad' [holy struggle] just a few days ago," a fiery-eyed



An Israeli soldier ties a blindfold over the eyes of a Palestinian suspected of belonging to the militant Hamas movement as they arrest Palestinians during the night of Thursday. Behind, in an army truck, another Palestinian is also blindfolded (Reuters photo)

Mr. Netanyahu told Israel's Channel Two television.

"Stop the incitement. Jail the murderers. Find the weapons stashes and explosives. Act as you are obligated," he said.

By calling off peace talks, Mr. Netanyahu broke ranks with the way the left-leaning Labour Party predecessors he ousted last year dealt with suicide attacks.

They also launched crack-

downs but said halting peace-making would only allow "terrorists" to achieve their goals.

"Instead of fighting terror they decided to fight the Palestinian [National] Authority," Mr. Arafat's aide Nabil Abu said of Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing government.

World leaders urged the sides to press on with talks. Wednesday's attack deep-

Hamas stops short of claiming Jerusalem bombing

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — A leaflet issued Friday by the Islamist Hamas praised suicide bombers who blew up an Israeli market but stopped short of claiming responsibility for the attack. The leaflet, faxed to an international news agency, called the attack "a practical response to the hostile Zionist practices against our people and our nation which has witnessed a noticeable escalation since the terrorist Netanyahu came to office in the Zionist entity." A leaflet issued in the name of Hamas military brigades on the day of the attack had claimed responsibility and given Israel until 9 p.m. Sunday to free all Palestinian prisoners. Israeli and Palestinian officials questioned its authenticity. The new leaflet did not repeat the ultimatum. It said: "The martyrs of Jerusalem attack [was] carried out by two heroes from the Mujahideen [fighters] of our people." It did not say the two bombers belonged to Hamas.

ened a four-month peace crisis sparked in March when Mr. Netanyahu broke ground on a Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem.

"Peace can move forward only if the Palestinian [National] Authority and Yasser Arafat undertake what he hasn't done so far and that is a full court press against the terrorists," Mr. Netanyahu told Reuters in an interview.

"We have every right to take the actions necessary to defend our citizens and we will do so," he said when asked to elaborate on earlier comments by aides that Israeli forces would re-enter PNA areas if Mr. Arafat failed to act.

Israeli and Palestinian security forces arrested suspected Islamist militants in separate raids in the West Bank and Gaza.

In Gaza, Palestinian forces released two senior Hamas political leaders after detaining them for three hours.

Mr. Netanyahu said Israel would arrest Palestinian Police Chief Ghazi Jabali,

accused by Israel of organising attacks on Jewish settlers, if he left PNA territory. Mr. Jabali scoffed.

"Israel can't arrest me. If they come to Gaza or any place else I am, they will not return," Mr. Jabali told reporters. "Do they think that Palestinian people are puppets?"

Officials said Israeli-PNA security meetings took place late Wednesday in the West Bank but they did not elaborate. They said further contacts were expected overnight.

Israeli pathologists were unable to identify the bodies of the two bombers Thursday. Security sources said they were not sure of the authenticity of a leaflet issued in Hamas's name claiming responsibility for the attack.

In the West Bank village of Dahariya, Israeli forces detained members of two Arab families whose two sons, both Islamist militants, went missing 15 months ago.

Forensic experts were checking to see if their DNA matched that of the bombers.

Extremists should not be allowed to impose agenda — Crown Prince

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Thursday stressed the need to overcome all obstacles facing the resumption of the peace process, saying that it is only through comprehensive peace that security can be achieved.

Prince Hassan, who met with the European Union (EU) envoy Miguel Moratinos Thursday said extremist minorities should not be allowed to impose their agenda on the region and to deprive its peoples from establishing peace. The

Crown Prince called for focusing on major and essential issues and giving them priority over temporary or daily events. Prince Hassan and Mr. Moratinos condemned acts of violence which erupt whenever a glimmer of hope for achieving progress in the peace march exists.

Mr. Moratinos emphasised the EU's resolve to make every possible effort to push the peace process forward, noting that violence and counter violence will not contribute to the establishment of comprehensive

peace in the region. He said the EU will continue to support Jordan and to bolster cooperation with this country, as a gesture of appreciation of its important and vital role in building regional peace and stability. The meeting was attended by Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh.

Also Thursday, Dr. Tarawneh discussed in a separate meeting with the EU envoy developments of the Middle East peace process and the need to intensify efforts to ensure progress on the Palestinian-Israeli track.

Ross to travel to Mideast after mourning is over

WASHINGTON (AFP) — President Bill Clinton said Friday he will send envoy Dennis Ross to the Mideast with fresh ideas for reviving peace talks once the week-long mourning for victims of this week's Jerusalem bombings ends.

He also indicated that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright might soon make her first trip to the Middle East.

"When the period of mourning is over, I will send Dennis Ross to the Middle East to meet with the leaders there with our latest ideas," Mr. Clinton said.

Mr. Ross postponed a trip this week to the Middle East after two suicide bombers killed 13 people Wednesday in a central Jerusalem market, essentially derailing a new U.S. push to resume stalled negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

Mr. Clinton declined to set a date for Ms. Albright's mission but stressed that he always intended she should go.

"I have said all along that I will send the Secretary of State to the Middle East at the appropriate time but I want Mr. Ross to go there...to get the reaction of the leaders," he said.

Ms. Albright has not followed up on the intense Mideast shuttle diplomacy of her predecessor, Warren Christopher, sparking charges Mr. Clinton is backing off his commitment to the region.

But a recent agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians to discuss some

long-delayed issues prompted Mr. Ross's thwarted mission Tuesday.

Now the bombing has sent U.S. officials scrambling for a new strategy to restart the peace negotiations, which have been stalled since March over Israel's decision to build settlements in Arab east Jerusalem.

Israel's subsequent security crackdown has outraged the Palestinians and the two sides appear farther apart than ever.

The attack may also jeopardise the U.S. aid package to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), the Middle East Peace Facilitation Act (MEPFA), as the opposition-led U.S. Congress is threatening to reject renewal after the August 12 expiration.

White House spokesman Michael McCurry said the administration is pushing for renewal as the aid package was key to the Mideast peace process but it said it had warned Palestinian President Yasser Arafat the package could be at risk.

"Support of the [Palestinian National] Authority and the transformations taking place is a central element...to strengthening the changes that will support peace in the territories," he said.

Mr. McCurry added, however, that the aid was conditioned on "the capacity of the [Palestinian National] Authority to effectively administer its own affairs...and that includes strong commitments to combat terrorism and to enhance security."



Her Majesty Queen Noor is welcomed by Belgian Queen Fabiola (left) at the Brussels private airport, Friday. The two queens visited the hospitals where the injured of last week's plane crash at Ostende Air Show are being treated (AFP photo)

Queen Noor flies to Belgium to condole air show crash victims

BRUSSELS (AFP) — Her Majesty Queen Noor arrived in Belgium Friday to pay tribute to the nine people killed when a Jordanian light aircraft crashed at an airshow in Ostende last weekend and to visit some of the 55 injured. Accompanied by Queen Fabiola, widow of former Belgian King Baudouin I, Queen Noor visited three people suffering severe burns, who are being treated in Ghent, northwestern Belgium.

Afterwards, the Queen met

several other people injured in the crash in Bruges and Ostende, both in the north-west of the country. She was later to visit the scene of the accident at the civilian airport in Ostende to place a wreath of flowers in memory of the nine killed. A commission of inquiry investigating the causes of the accident is to deliver a preliminary report by August 15. Amongst other things, it will seek to establish why the Jordanian pilot Omar Hani Bilal, 28, failed to respect the scheduled flight

plan. The German-made XT-300 crashed into the ground last Saturday 100 metres from a public grandstand after failing to recover from a loop, sending fiery debris into the crowd. The pilot and seven spectators were killed instantly. A ninth person died Sunday. Legal sources said a post-mortem had established that the pilot was not suffering from any illness and was not under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the crash.



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HRH Crown Prince Hassan Friday greets Jordanian soldiers who have just completed a peace-keeping mission in Slovenia. Prince Hassan praised the role played by the Jordan Armed Forces in the peace-keeping operations, as well as in maintaining international security and relieving principles and ideals which respect human dignity and rights. Prince Hassan was received by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mirai Kasheh and senior Armed Forces officers. Prince Hassan was accompanied by HRH Prince Rashed Ben Al Hassan (Petra Photo)

Crown Prince congratulates returning athletes

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordanian athletes were lauded for their impressive achievements in the recent Pan-Arab Games, while sports officials were called upon to strive even further, when HRH Crown Prince Hassan hosted a lunch in their honour Thursday.

The Kingdom's athletes won a total of 39 medals in Beirut, including more gold medals than in the past seven Pan-Arab Games combined.

Addressing the delegation members, Prince Hassan praised the athletes who bested previous records at the games during which the soccer team was awarded a gold medal for its win of the final soccer match.

The Crown Prince urged sports officials to coalesce of their teams' future plans as a national endeavour.

Prince Hassan emphasised HRH Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein's moral support and untiring efforts to advance Jordanian sports.

The Crown Prince also urged the adoption of an integrated plan which would allocate JD 25 million to support sports and youth up to the year 2000.

However, the Prince deplored the injuries and deaths resulting from "festive firing" by those cele-



HRH Crown Prince Hassan congratulates Jordanian athletes on their recent achievements in the last Pan-Arab Games. The Kingdom's athletes won a total of 39 medals in Beirut, including more gold medals than in the past seven Pan-Arab Games combined (Petra photo)

brating Jordan's soccer win as well as recent tawjih results.

"Cherishing and celebrating such successes should be done in sportsmanlike manner rather than by firing in the air and causing harm," he said.

Jordan finished fifth overall among 19 competing countries in the best Jordanian showing since the Pan-Arab Games were launched in 1953.

The Kingdom brought home 10 gold, 8 silver and 21 bronze medals in the two-week event, with Jordanian athletes competing in 14 of the 20 events.

Referring to the next Pan-Arab Games which Amman will be hosting in the year 2001, Prince Hassan affirmed: "It was not easy to obtain the honour of organising the games in Jordan. It will not be an easy task and I entrust you

with the preparations."

The meeting was attended by Their Royal Highnesses Prince Abdullah, Prince Rashed Ben Al Hassan, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid and Minister of Culture and Youth Qasem Abu Ein.

To mark Jordan's sports achievements, the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications has decided to issue commemorative stamps.

'Malaysia to employ 3,000 Jordanians'

KUALA LUMPUR (Petra)

— Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Friday announced that the Malaysian government intends to employ 3,000 Jordanians to work here.

Following a meeting with Malaysian Premier Mahathir Muhammad, Dr. Majali said the Kuala Lumpur government will consider recruiting others in the coming years.

On other matters of cooperation, such as water, health, investment and edu-

cation, Dr. Majali described the two countries as agreeing to activate bilateral agreements signed in 1994.

"The Malaysian government will launch a project to build dams in the southern parts of the Kingdom," Dr. Majali said.

The premier toured several Malaysian projects, accompanied by Minister of Health and Medical Care Ashraf Kurdi, Minister of Finance Suleiman Hafez and Jordan's Ambassador to Malaysia Luay Khash-

man. Dr. Majali Wednesday stated in a conference at Langkawi that Jordan is seeking cooperation and coordination with all countries on "Smart Partnership."

The prime minister stressed Jordan's support for a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East region, and pointed to Israel's intransigence as causing an impasse in the peace talks.

Peace cannot be reached

without full recognition of Palestinian rights on their national soil as well as their right to self-determination, he said.

Dr. Majali called for the immediate resumption of peace talks on all tracks, including the Lebanese-Israeli and Syrian-Israeli tracks, so that peace and stability can be a reality in the entire region and its people can prosper.

'Kingdom supports universal land mine treaty'

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Brussels International Conference for a Global Ban on Anti-Personnel Land Mines, held from June 24 to 27, has been described as a positive step by both international and local observers.

Jordan was among 97 countries to adopt a declaration, targeted towards an anti-personnel land mine ban treaty, to be signed by the end of this year.

"In associating themselves with the Brussels Declaration, states affirm that the essential elements of the treaty should include a comprehensive ban on the use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of anti-personnel land mines; the destruction of stockpiled and removed anti-personnel land mines, and international cooperation and assistance in the field of mine clearance in affected countries," says Mu'in Qassis, assistant head of the International Committee of the Red Cross Delegation in Jordan (ICRC).

The ICRC, the United Nations and 100 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from 40 countries form part of the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines (ICBL).

These organisations and 155 other states attended the Brussels Conference.

The aim of the meeting was to review measures taken towards the prohibition of anti-personnel land mines and to agree on necessary action for the realisation of a treaty banning these weapons before the end of 1997.

This conference stems from the Ottawa Conference held in Canada in October last year.

The Ottawa process, attended by 53 states including Jordan, set forth a mechanism for the ban of anti-personnel landmines.

Israel, Syria and Egypt were out party to the process.

Next month, at a diplomatic conference to take place in Oslo, discussions will be underway regarding the wording of the new international humanitarian law treaty.

Only the signatory countries to the Brussels Declaration will attend this meeting. The actual treaty is expected to be signed by the first week of December in Ottawa.

The treaty commits countries to

long-term programmes to meet the needs of mine victims and to clear existing mines.

"We are talking about clear commitments to abide by a treaty calling for a total ban on the production, stockpiling, exporting and transferring of anti-personnel land mines," Mr. Qassis stressed.

At the Brussels Conference, the President of the ICRC Cornelio Sommaruga urged states to commit themselves not only to a ban of anti-personnel mines, but also to long-term programmes to meet the needs of mine victims as well as clear existing mines.

An integrated approach to victim assistance was a point of focus at one of the conference's round tables. The first two days dealt with issues relating to the treaty, while the next two were dedicated to four round tables discussing anti-personnel mine problems.

According to the ICRC database on mine incidents, over 9,000 victims of explosions have been recorded in more than 40 countries since 1995.

A comprehensive programme for the assistance and support of land mine victims and for countries willing to initiate mine-clearing operations is part of the commitment stipulated within the treaty.

Observers believe that Jordan will be the first Arab country to sign this treaty.

Others however, have demonstrated certain reservations. "In principle, Jordan supports all humanitarian efforts aimed at achieving a total ban on anti-personnel land mines," states Vice President for Military Affairs at Mu'tab University Dr. Ma'rouf Bakhit. "That is why Jordan adopted the declaration... [the Kingdom] is open to international cooperation, but we have to wait and see." He told the Jordan Times that, provided the treaty becomes universal, Jordan encourages its adoption.

Dr. Bakhit explained that Jordan is in the process of assessing all initiatives in this domain.

He stated that the Kingdom must first study all aspects of the situation with priority given to humanitarian concerns.

"The treaty must be balanced, with national security interests paying particular attention to neighbouring countries" according to Dr. Bakhit.

Dr. Chris Giannou from the ICRC

Health Operations Division states that there are three patterns by which people become victims of land mine incidents.

Legs, feet, genitalia and arms are often the first casualties when people step on blast land mines. Any part of the body is susceptible for victims who survive explosions of fragmentation mines, the second type of incident. Children and deminers are the victims of the third pattern. This pattern of injury occurs when children mistake a mine for a toy and detonate it, or when deminers accidentally set off a mine.

This results in severe casualties to the hands and face of the victim.

It costs an estimated \$300 to sweep one land mine. Specialists in the field of land mines believe that there are still around 280,000 land mines buried in Jordan as a consequence of previous wars.

For this reason, the Kingdom has taken measures to rid its border areas of land mines.

"Jordan receives technical and financial assistance from countries such as Germany and the United States to demine these devices," Dr. Bakhit explained. "Jordan even relies on its own meagre resources in efforts to sweep land mines."

Regardless of expenses to the country, Jordan is invested in the well-being of its farmers, and particularly citizens residing near the borders, according to Dr. Bakhit.

Syria, Iran, Kuwait, Iraq, Egypt are also impacted by land mines, and in the Western Sahara, millions of land mines remain from World War Two, according to an ICRC assistant official.

According to a Human Rights Watch Arms Project document, Jordan is among 37 countries which have announced that they do not currently export anti-personnel land mines and do not intend to do so in the future.

Among the nations suspected of presently exporting anti-personnel mines are Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Bosnia, Serbia and Vietnam.

These nations have exported anti-personnel mines in the past, and have not yet declared a ban nor moratorium.

Nations still producing land mines include Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Argentina and Japan.

WHAT'S GOING ON

JERASH FESTIVAL

* Ballet entitled "Sleeping Beauty" by Russian Omsk Ballet Company at the North Theatre at 8:30 p.m.

* Concert by Spanish Dos Hermanas Band at the South Theatre at 8:30 p.m.

* Concert by the Arab Music Band at Artemis Steps at 8:30 p.m.

* Musical performance by Ramallah Band of Palestine at 8:30 p.m.

* Poetry recitals by Palestinian, Lebanese and Jordanian poets at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabel Amman at 8:45 p.m.

* Play entitled "Salamistan" at Gracia Theatre at 8:00 p.m. (to be followed by oud performance by Ghassan Abiad at 8:30 p.m.)

* Musical performance by Karagounides Group of Greece and Jordanian bands, as well as a circus at the main square at 7:00 p.m.

* Display of handicrafts and sculptures at Zeus vault.

LECTURE

* "The Jordanian Foreign Policy With Its Arab and Islamic Dimensions" by Dr. Fawzi Al Rifai at the main square at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* "The Jordanian Foreign Policy With Its Arab and Islamic Dimensions" by Dr. Fawzi Al Rifai at the main square at 8:00 p.m.

Conditions outlined for volunteer work

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Social Development Mohammad Mamser Friday stressed the importance of social voluntary work and announced conditions for recruiting volunteers therein.

Dr. Mamser announced the inception of a project to recruit social work volunteers in the Kingdom to a committee responsible for same.

He also set conditions for young men and women who have expressed interest in this work.

Dr. Mamser described political, social and economic developments over the past decades as creating social imbalances in the nation.

This has resulted in an increase in social problems, juvenile delinquency, crimes, disability, broken families, poverty and unemployment, he said.

"The situation has prompted the creation of charitable and voluntary societies to Jordan whose number has now risen to almost 700," according to Dr. Mamser.

He emphasised the ministry's determination that persons volunteer for social work as a contribution to the nation. "Voluntary work enhances the spirit of national belonging and participation in the execution of programmes designed to help local communities," he added.

Citizens wishing to work for the ministry must abide by the ministry rules and regulations, remain committed to their voluntary service, undergo training for social work and accept whichever service is assigned by the ministry, the minister explained.

He stated that the ministry would take the volunteers' capabilities and interests into consideration before assigning a certain person to a specific area.

"Those volunteers engaged by the ministry must not demand permanent work for monthly wages nor expect any financial remuneration for their work nor compensation for any injury sustained in the course of their voluntary duty," the minister said.

Volunteers will be given assigned work in primary health care, cultural and artistic fields and social and sports arenas among other jobs, he enumerated.

Dr. Mamser also discussed a national conference on social work to be convened soon.

Ministry Secretary General Farouq Naghwai and other senior officials attended the meeting.

Deputy emphasises citizen role

DEIR ABU SAEED

(Petra) — Former Deputy Prime Minister Deputy Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh Friday emphasised the role of citizens in fighting economic stagnation, poverty and unemployment.

In a lecture delivered at the Jenin Al Safa municipality, Mr. Rawabdeh described national unity as one of basic pillars in solving the above mentioned problems.

"We should unite ranks and face these issues," he said. "Jordanians should be involved in the decision-making process and exercise their right to [vote]."

"We should express our opinions and views in a proper and peaceful manner," Mr. Rawabdeh affirmed.

He described the merging of some political parties into the National Constitutional Party as an attempt to better consolidate party efforts and endeavours to serve the nation and its citizens.

NEWS IN BRIEF

King congratulates Benin

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Friday sent a cable of congratulations to president of Benin on behalf of the Jordanian people and government on Benin's national day. The King wished the president and people of Benin further progress and prosperity. The King also sent a cable to Swiss President Arnold Koller congratulating him and the Swiss people on their national day.

Pakistanis to visit Kingdom

AMMAN (Petra) — A Pakistani delegation will arrive here Aug. 10 on a two-day official visit during which it will meet with senior Jordanian officials and businesspersons. The delegation, led by Senator and President of the Pakistani Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Elias Ahmad Beillor will hold talks with Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf and other senior Jordanian economists.

Bahraini concludes visit

AMMAN (J.T.) — Bahraini Public Security Director General Duetj Ben Khalifeh Al Khalifeh Friday concluded a four-day visit to Jordan during which he met with Public Security Department (PSD) Director Lieutenant General Nasouh Muheiddin and other senior PSD officers. Mr.

Khalifeh was briefed on Jordan's expertise in public security and signed an agreement of cooperation on police issues. Lt. Gen. Muheiddin described Jordan as ready to extend assistance to the Bahraini public security forces.

Lawzi emphasises codes

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Public Works and Housing Nasser Lawzi Friday presided over a ministry meeting and stressed the importance of strict compliance with the country's building codes. Mr. Lawzi also emphasised the need to abide by the rules and regulations of the ministry in giving allowances and promotions. The minister and other senior officials were briefed by the ministry's director of the Department of Road Maintenance on systems followed to ensure the regular maintenance of the Kingdom's roads and to finish projects on time.

Training to begin in Petra

PETRA (Petra) — A training course for 50 tourist guides is to commence Saturday in Petra. The course, organised by the Petra Regional Council, in cooperation with the University of Jordan, aims to develop the skills of Jordanian tourist guides and provide them with tourism-related data. University specialists will lecture on the history of Jordan, Petra and other sites of importance in the Kingdom.

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A Federal Express MD-11 cargo plane lies burning upside down on the tarmac at Newark International Airport in Newark, New Jersey. Five crew members miraculously escaped unhurt when the plane arriving from Anchorage, Alaska, crash-landed, overturned and burst into flames about 200 yards from a terminal (Reuters photo)

U.S. cargo plane crash-lands at Newark

NEWARK (R) — Five crew members miraculously escaped unhurt when their Federal Express MD-11 cargo plane crash-landed early Thursday at Newark International Airport, overturned and burst into flames, officials said.

The five flight crew crawled to safety through a cockpit window after the crash at 1:35 a.m. EDT about 200 metres from a terminal, a spokesman for the New York/New Jersey Port Authority said.

"It was a very hard landing," port authority spokesman Allen Morrison said. "The plane, on impact, flipped over and began to burn. All five crew members on board were able to crawl

out the cockpit window. They all walked away from it," Mr. Morrison said. They were treated for unspecified minor injuries at Elizabeth General Hospital in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

"We're very pleased that no was injured seriously and we're looking forward to them returning to work," FedEx spokesman, Chris Atkins said at Newark Airport.

Hours after the crash, firefighters were still battling the burning, charred wreckage with foam.

The airport, one of the busiest in the United States, was closed for several hours before reopening at 7:33 a.m. EDT for some departures, another port authority spokesman said.

Arriving aircraft were being diverted to John F. Kennedy International Airport and La Guardia Airport in New York, officials said.

The cause of the crash was not known. Officials said National Transportation Safety Board investigators would visit the site to begin their probe once the blaze was extinguished.

"Pieces of the plane are scattered on the runway," Mr. Morrison added. The fuselage was missing both wings and the tail section, witnesses said.

CBS Radio quoted a witness as saying he had seen flames coming from the plane before it crashed.

The wide-body aircraft was flying into Newark

from Anchorage, Alaska, according to Warren Perkins, a Federal Express hub command centre agent in Memphis.

"It is one of the larger types of aircraft in our fleet," Mr. Perkins said.

Fedex is the world's biggest cargo airline, carrying 3.77 million scheduled freight tonnes in 1996, ahead of Lufthansa with 2.88 million tonnes, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

Fedex, which has 23 MD-11s in its fleet, is also the biggest U.S. domestic cargo carrier, with 2.97 million tonnes last year, ahead of UPS with 2.60 million.

Afghan Taleban warn press to report 'reality' about war

KABUL (Agencies) — A senior Taleban official lashed out at journalists Friday, warning foreign correspondents they could be expelled unless they report "the reality" of Afghanistan's civil war.

The warning by Interior Minister Khairullah Khairkhwa came as Taleban soldiers face off against their enemies just 15 kilometres north of the war-weary Afghan capital.

The Taleban was angered by reports saying soldiers from neighbouring Pakistan, an ally of the Taleban, were fighting alongside the Islamic militia north of Kabul.

"Across Afghanistan, you cannot find more than 50 Pakistanis fighting the holy war with the Taleban," he said. He said "they are Muslims and we can persuade them to leave Afghanistan."

Pakistan is considered a close ally of the Taleban's and opposition forces repeatedly accuse Pakistan of arming, training and fighting alongside the Taleban.

Pakistan has denied the accusation, but says that many of those fighting in Afghanistan are Afghan nationals who have been studying at religious schools in Pakistan.

During the 1980s Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan hosted more than 5 million Afghan refugees. At least 1.5 million still are living here.

Mr. Khairkhwa told foreign correspondents "to report the reality of our country or otherwise there is no room for journalists to work."

The warning came as artillery and rocket fire reverberated throughout Kabul from the sporadic fighting between Taleban and opposition forces north of the capital.

Mr. Khairkhwa said the Taleban captured Guldarah town, 15 kilometres in mountains north of the city, from forces led by ousted Defence Minister Ahmed Shah Massoud, a leader of the opposition.

But the AFP correspondent witnessed a fierce Taleban attack being beaten back barely 20 kilometres north of Kabul. With fierce artillery and mortar battles raging from dawn to the early afternoon, including heavy machine gun fire from Taleban-controlled hilltops overlooking Hossein Kot, the front lines remain unchanged.

"We are strong at the moment and are able to push the Taleban out of Kabul," a frontline commander loyal to ousted government military strongman Ahmad Shah Massoud asserted.

On Wednesday Massoud predicted that Kabul would fall "within three to seven days," provided the Taleban did not gain fresh recruits from neighbouring Pakistan.

The forward positions here are, however, flanked to the east by hilltops held by Taleban fighters.

At one stage during a heavy gun battle, a group of Taleban were seen by AFP attempting to charge down the hills and seize Hossein Kot, but a burst of machine-gun fire sent them running with equal pace back up the hill.

A Taleban jet was also active early Thursday, dropping at

least one bomb on the Masood-held town of Mir Bacha Kot, around eight kilometres north of here.

All 50 beds in one first aid post north of here were filled with wounded from Thursday's fighting, of which at least 10 were military.

The ex-government commander here conceded that his forces were hampered by supply problems over the crucial Salang highway, where Masood fighters blew up a bridge earlier this year to stem a Taleban advance.

The Salang Highway — which begins 77 kilometres north of Kabul — traverses the snow-capped Hindu Kush mountains and links Masood fighters to the northern stronghold of the opposition alliance.

"Once our supplies are stronger we will be able to make the final push," the commander said.

Scores of reinforcements loyal to Masood have been arriving in the plains north of Kabul for the past two days, signalling little possibility for immediate peace in the fertile farming area.

However, other opposition members — including troops loyal to ethnic-Uzbek warlord Abdul Malik and a Shiite Muslim faction — have yet to join Masood's fighters in the area.

Fighters at the frontline, all donning their characteristic floppy cloth caps, said their motivation in battling the Taleban was the large numbers of Pakistani fighters they have encountered at the front.

"We have captured a lot of Pakistanis ... they do not belong here," one Masood fighter said.

Despite the confidence of Masood fighters, Taleban fighters on the other side of lines are showing equal determination in defending the war-shattered city they seized in September last year.

Meanwhile a U.N. envoy put off a peace trip to northern Afghanistan Friday, the second interruption in two days in his attempt to head off a bloody battle for the capital Kabul.

Envoy Norbert Holl was to have arrived in the opposition alliance headquarters of Mazar-e-Sharif Friday, but U.N. officials said he was not coming at the moment and they had no new date for the trip.

There was no immediate explanation for the second postponement of Mr. Holl's trip after one Thursday, when the alliance fighting the dominant Taleban Islamic militia said at the last moment that their leaders were unavailable for talks.

United Nations officials in Mazar-e-Sharif said Thursday the talks had been put off until Friday because alliance leaders were out of the northern city where the negotiations were to be held.

A senior Pakistani Foreign Ministry official, Ifkhar Mursheed, could also not go to the southern Afghan city of Kandahar Thursday for talks with Taleban officials because of bad weather and was now due to visit there Saturday.

Martian forecast cold and dusty, but no rain

PASADENA (R) — Space officials issued a weather forecast for Mars Thursday, giving humans the clearest idea yet of the climate on another planet.

Based on images and data sent back from the pathfinder craft, there are no blue skies over the red planet, but plenty of clouds, although don't expect it to ever rain.

Sounding like a TV weatherman, Pathfinder meteorologist, Robert Haberle told reporters at a weekly briefing: "The weather report on Mars for Sol (Martian day) 26. The pressure is 6.71 millibars and falling. Daytime temperatures are eight degrees above zero Fahrenheit, with winds light from the west."

Continuing the spoof forecast, he added, "We expect continued cool temperatures around 10 degrees F with overnight lows around minus 105 F, and a chance of late-night or early morning clouds."

More seriously, he said unprecedented readings — taken every four seconds for a whole day — show Mars to have a turbulent atmosphere, with major oscillations in air pressure and huge fluctuations in temperatures of 30-40 degrees F in seconds or minutes.

His colleague Mark Lemmon said the pink clouds in the skies over Mars were composed predominantly of dust, but they also contained "waterised particles."

"There is water on Mars, no question," Mr. Haberle said. "But it's definitely not liquid — rather ice or particles. It will definitely not rain on Mars."

"There's a white sun with pink around it at sunset, but no blue sky anywhere on Mars," Mr. Lemmon said.

Project scientist Matt Golombek said the data about Mars' atmosphere — clouds and pressure changes — were some of the most significant discoveries of the Pathfinder mission, which landed on the planet on July 4.

Japan weather bureau says N. Korea drought serious

TOKYO (R) — Preliminary data backs statements by famine-stricken North Korea that it has been suffering from a serious heat wave and drought for the last two months, Japan's meteorological agency said Friday.

According to the agency's compilation of preliminary day-to-day data on temperature and rainfall, most parts of North Korea received less than half the average amount of rainfall for June and July.

In the most extreme case, Wonsan, on North Korea's east coast had only 20 mm of rain during July, or just seven per cent of the average rainfall for that month.

The capital, Pyongyang, had only 32 mm of rain in June, or 35 per cent of the average for the month, and 125 mm or 44 per cent of the average in July.

Earlier this week, North

Average temperatures exceeded the norm by about two degrees Celsius in those two months, an official of the agency's Climate Information Bureau said.

"This data, although raw, appears to show a serious case of drought," the official said.

He said that the day-to-day data, classified as Synop and exchanged among members of the World Meteorological Organisation, was only "Working data" and should not be considered accurate, because of occasional input errors and missing transmissions.

North Korea has not yet provided the more accurate set of weather data, compiled on a monthly basis and called Climat, for June and July, he said.

Earlier this week, North Korea's state-run press termed the current heat wave the worst in 61 years and said the subsequent drought was inflicting serious damage on agriculture and other domains of the national economy.

Devastating floods in 1994 and 1995 washed away a substantial portion of North Korea's crop acreage.

International aid agencies have stepped up food appeals for the Stalinist state, warning of imminent starvation, particularly among small children.

The Rome-based U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) launched a fresh appeal earlier this month for \$46 million in food aid for North Korea on top of an earlier request for \$95.5 million.

British tanker rescues 21 seamen

PERTH (AFP) — Twenty-one crew members on a stricken bulk carrier in the Indian Ocean were rescued by a British tanker and taken to the nearby Cocos Islands, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority said Friday.

The men, from the Panamanian-registered, Mv Goodwill, were picked up early Friday by the tanker, British Skill, the authority said.

The men, Indonesians and Koreans, were safe and well after being forced to abandon the carrier Thursday night after it had hit a reef and started taking on water and spending most of the night in a lifeboat, Authority spokesman, David Gray said.

Mr. Gray said although the rescue operation, about

60 nautical miles southwest of Cocos, was a complete success, it was not easy.

"Rescuers had to work in winds of 20-25 knots and seas of three metres," Mr. Gray said.

He said the 150,000-tonne Goodwill was en route from the port of Dampier, in western Australia's north-west, to the Suez Canal with 100,000 tonnes of iron ore when it ran aground on the reef.

Meanwhile, the owners of the vessel are mounting an operation in a bid to save the stranded carrier from sinking.

Mr. Gray said a salvage team from Singapore was heading to the carrier to make an assessment.

"There is a possibility the carrier could sink. But we can't do much about that until we get advice from the salvage team, which should be at the site by the weekend," he said.

He said the carrier had 1,130 tonnes of heavy fuel oil and 107 tonnes of diesel and the authority had considered the spillage consequences if the vessel did sink.

"The likely drifts would take it to the north towards Sumatra, 1,000 nautical miles away," he said.

"However, because the fuel is heavy fuel oil, most would drop to the bottom of the sea."

The maritime union of Australia, which represents all 10,000 Australian seamen, responded angrily to the Goodwill incident, calling for a ban of Panamanian-registered vessels in Australian waters.

Hopes dim for Australia landslide survivors

THREDBO (Agencies) — Four people have been confirmed dead in the wreckage of two ski lodges which were destroyed in a landslide here, police said Friday.

But three of the corpses remained trapped under a collapsed concrete slab and emergency workers were attempting to free them.

The body of a man was pulled from the rubble late Thursday as rescuers toiled into the night in the faint hope of finding survivors among the total of 20 believed trapped inside.

After two nights of freezing temperatures since Wednesday night's landslide at the ski resort of Thredbo, frustration began to show on the faces of the searchers who were unable to remove the second victim due to fears of another slide.

Police said the chance now of freeing survivors from the tonnes of collapsed concrete, twisted metal, dirt and splintered trees were "infinitesimally small."

A total of 20 people are believed to have been buried

at Thredbo, southwest of Sydney in Australia's snowy mountains, when a steep hillside gave way, sending one ski lodge crashing into another and burying all the occupants.

Increasing the frustration, searchers reported sighting the foot of a third body poking through the debris Wednesday, but it was found to be only a bag of potatoes, a search spokesman later told Reuters.

Friends and family of the victims gathered Friday at Thredbo's small, sunlit church to pray for survivors, but police made it clear that relatives were not being given false hope.

"I am quite confident they understand the enormity of the task that faces us," Superintendent Charlie Sanderson told reporters.

Police feel many of the victims are trapped under a massive weight of concrete, but the instability of the slope has forced rescuers to painstakingly cut the slabs into pieces before removal.

Optic fibre cameras and

thermal imaging equipment have failed to show signs of life in the wreckage of the Carlyn and Bimbadeen lodges.

Search crews are no longer putting a time limit on the rescue effort, despite saying at the outset that they were likely to reach the victims within two days.

The work of picking through the rubble has been fraught with danger and hazards such as leaking fuel from crushed cars.

The rubble is 10 metres deep in places.

"We are not going to do that (speed up the search) until we are satisfied that every person is out of that rubble," Inspector Barry Smith told reporters.

Search crews have been forced to shore up the site as they work to prevent a further slide, a danger that delayed any concerted rescue effort for 10 hours after the landslide.

Police said those buried included a middle-aged couple from California, a New Zealand woman and 17

Australians.

Messages of sympathy poured in from around the world Friday to the small, close-knit community which swells to 4,000 in the skiing season from a summer population of about 500.

Britain's Queen Elizabeth, who is also Australia's head of state, sent a message of sympathy to the victims' friends and families, Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer cut short an official visit to Japan, and Prime Minister John Howard issued a special statement of sympathy from his hospital bed.

New South Wales Premier Bob Carr toured the site Friday and talked with victims' relatives.

Church services were held around the country Friday. In Canberra, government dignitaries and community leaders joined in prayer.

Experts believe seepage from a mountain spring may have caused the earth to give way.

Yeltsin names vice premier for ethnic relations

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin named Friday a prominent figure from the troubled north Caucasus region as a new deputy prime minister for ethnic relations, Interfax news agency said.

Ramazan Abdulatipov, a former deputy speaker of the upper house of parliament before he was elected a deputy to the lower house in 1996, will be the seventh deputy premier in the government.

He comes from the multi-ethnic north Caucasus republic of Dagestan, which borders the Caspian Sea and

the rebel republic of Chechnya, and is a member of the tiny Avar ethnic minority.

His appointment comes amid renewed tension between two other north Caucasus Russian republics — Ingushetia and North Ossetia.

Mr. Yeltsin urged calm in the region on Thursday and said he would invite the leaders of the two republics to meet with him soon.

Ingush refugees trying to return to their homes inside North Ossetia, from where they were driven out in a 1992 war, have come under violent attack in recent

weeks.

An armed group ransacked a camp housing Ingush refugees in Turskoye village in the Prigorodny region Tuesday, beating dozens of people, taking seven hostages and burning down 83 huts, Russian reports said.

On July 17, a rocket-propelled grenade was fired at a bus carrying refugees, injuring 17, 10 of them seriously.

Russian Security Council Secretary Ivan Rybkin ordered the creation of a task force on the conflict, bringing together officials from the interior, secret service

and defence ministries, as well as the finance ministry.

Mr. Rybkin also announced that Mr. Yeltsin might meet with Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov at the start of August, following criticism by Chechen leaders that Moscow is not doing enough to rebuild its devastated post-war economy.

Chechnya declared independence in 1991 and drove out Russian troops in a 1994-1996 war that left tens of thousands of people dead and much of the tiny republic in ruins.

U.N. military observers arrive in Brazzaville

KINSHASA (AFP) — U.N. military observers arrived in the troubled Congoles capital, Brazzaville, government radio announced Friday.

The 11-strong mission is to assess the needs of a peacekeeping force for Brazzaville, where talks between government and rebel forces have reached an impasse.

More than 4,000 people

have died in six weeks of fighting between the rival factions, according to state-run radio. It started when the government tried to disarm the private militia of former strongman Denis Sassou Nguesso.

Immediately after their arrival Thursday, the observers toured the Maya-Maya Airport and met peace talks leaders, the radio said.

Friday they are to meet

President Pascal Lissouba and Mr. Sassou Nguesso, the radio said.

It quoted a member of the U.N. mission saying the deployment of peace keepers would depend on "the political will of the Congolese people."

The mission is to report to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Talks stalled Wednesday when Mr. Sassou Nguesso

rejected a proposed peace plan and Mr. Lissouba dismissed his counter-proposals.

Under the plan, put forward by international mediator, Omar Bongo, Gabon's president, the rivals would form a reconciliation government and an inter-African peace force would be deployed in Brazzaville.

The proposal also set conditions for elections.

Renewed fighting in Sri Lanka kills 74

COLOMBO (AFP) — Heavy fighting which killed at least 74 fighters on both sides gripped northern and eastern Sri Lanka Friday as Tamil Tiger rebels and government forces exchanged artillery fire, officials said.

Quenillas of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fired mortar bombs at the Shanthivel military base in the eastern district of Batticaloa Friday,

killing two soldiers and a civilian, officials said.

Security forces retaliated but it was not immediately clear if there were any rebel casualties in the counter attack. There was no immediate reaction from the LTTE to the military reports.

The Defence Ministry said the worst fighting was near the northern town of Nedunkerni where 50 Tiger guerrillas and 17 soldiers,

including an officer were killed Thursday night.

A Defence Ministry spokesman said another Tiger guerrilla was shot dead by army snipers in the same area Thursday.

Fighting erupted again Friday in the north with the military attacking three LTTE cadres who had infiltrated an army defence line near the town of Ommathai, local officials said.

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Lessons on promises

WHEN BENYAMIN Netanyahu was elected prime minister in 1996, his narrow victory was linked to his promise to ensure security and to shield Israelis from attacks by militants and extremists. But in the first real test, the prime minister failed. From this Israelis should learn two lessons in order not to be misled or fooled again.

First, that the definition of security is not the one that Netanyahu, and those who think like him, support. Security does not mean twisting the concepts of the peace agreement to the liking and benefit of one side over the other and surely is not through military might. It has been proven before and underlined again last Wednesday, that Israeli provocations, whether in building settlements or delaying withdrawal and impeding full Palestinian authority, only exacerbate Arab frustration and incite bloodshed.

The path of peace, trust, concessions, understanding and fairness is the only hope of security and stability. And as such, Israel must realise that extremism, arrogance and its persistence on approaching negotiations only on its terms serve to provoke Arab anger.

Second, Israeli leaders are not, and will never be, capable of ensuring security as Netanyahu promised.

Wednesday's bloody attack in Jerusalem was the first that Netanyahu had to face since he was elected to fight extremism. What did he do?

He immediately put the blame on President Yasser Arafat and his failure to control the areas under his rule. The responsibility he promised to shoulder was quickly shifted to the Palestinian leader who was hammered for not cracking down hard on extremists. Netanyahu even decided to stop the financial proceeds to the Palestinian National Authority and called on the U.S. and European countries to halt the financial assistance they extend to the Palestinians.

When Netanyahu was elected on the pledge of security to the Israeli people, Arafat was not part of the equation and was not mentioned as the person who will be keeping and looking after such a promise. To the contrary, Netanyahu at the time refused for many weeks to meet and deal with Arafat and to shake his hand.

Isn't it strange that Arafat suddenly becomes the primary target of responsibility of the attack in Jerusalem when such a task was the sole duty of the Israeli leader?

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily said that Israel is the sole party responsible for the suicide attacks and the consequences of its occupation of Arab territories. No clause under the Oslo agreement says that the Palestinians, with their limited self-rule and powers, should assume responsibility for Israel's security and the security of the Israelis within the boundaries of their own state which is well protected by a nation armed to the teeth, said Tareq Masarweh. The writer said that Israel, which has been justifying its continued occupation of Arab lands with security reasons, amasses nuclear weapons and long-range missiles to ensure its own security and continues to disregard and mock the U.N. resolutions, is paying the price of its arrogance. How can the Palestinian leadership be responsible for the suicide attacks which occur inside Israel itself and how can the Palestinian police control the feelings of millions of Arabs and Muslims who are provoked every day by the Israeli occupation forces and the Jewish settlers, asked the writer. He said that the Palestinians cannot protect the interests of Israel whose repressive actions against the Palestinians never end and whose continued aggression sows the seeds of hatred and violence.

A WRITER for Al Dustour decried the practice of firing during social occasions, especially during weddings. Mohammad Daoud said that the stray bullets fired on these occasions have been responsible for the death and injury of scores of people and responsible for converting joy into sadness and grief among the members of the community. It is no secret that arms, ranging from hand guns to automatic weapons, are still in the hands of people in urban and rural regions and that these weapons are fired now and then on occasions and at the whims and desires of people, young and old, noted the writer. The presence of weapons in the hands of the public is a dangerous thing and no matter how hard the concerned authorities try to control the situation, they can never succeed to prevent the firing except through a nationwide campaign to collect all weapons. He called on the government to enforce the law and not to suffice itself with imprisoning the culprits but rather remove the weapons which have been causing a headache to the authorities and causing untold sufferings for the public.

Jordanian Perspective

'Security for Israelis will remain an elusive dream without a peace settlement with the Palestinians'

THE MANGLED bodies and wreckage we saw in West Jerusalem July 30 clearly represents the state of the Middle East peace process today. The dismembered bodies of the victims of the despicable attack against civilians symbolise the fragmentation of the hopes that the Oslo agreements sparked and the wreckage of the Jerusalem market represents the chaotic situation in the entire region.

We cannot but condemn the attack, or any other action against civilians, whether in Jerusalem or anywhere else. We in Jordan have always believed in and lived by the principle that violence cannot achieve anything and cannot replace dialogue and reason, even when it comes to our worst enemies. At the same time, we cannot but point out that Wednesday's bombing attack, regardless of who ever claimed responsibility for it, is the fruit of the illogical and arrogant policies adopted by the Israeli government.

It also shows the utter failure of the "hard line" followed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to ensure what he himself describes as his goal of "security for Israelis first and peace with the Arabs second." The attack is nothing but a sharp reminder that Netanyahu has managed to build so much frustration among the Palestinians that even the moderates among them are today convinced that no diplomacy and reasoning is going to work with the Israeli premier and that the only means to shake the Israeli

body is through violence. And that is precisely what they seem to have done.

The inevitable scenario that will follow is additional pressure on Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to "crack down" on Palestinian "barricade" of the Islamic Resistance Movement and Islamic Jihad. We should expect to hear Israeli and American leaders "demanding" that Arafat "rein in" the militants in the Palestinian ranks.

But how far is it possible for Arafat to "crack down" on his people who are demanding their legitimate rights, on the one hand, and to deal with any trace of optimism with his "hardline partner" Netanyahu to advance the quest for those rights, on the other? Will an Arafat crack down on Palestinian militants guarantee that Netanyahu will live up to the Israeli commitments under the Oslo agreements? Will it lead to Netanyahu's abandoning his plans to swallow the land of Palestine while portraying himself as genuinely interested in peace with the Arabs?

So what is the purpose of pressuring Arafat when it is clear that all such pressure is aimed at doing away with the strength in the Palestinian struggle for liberation and serve Israel's goal of perpetuating its occupation of the Palestinian lands?

Netanyahu and his allies should stop in their track for a moment, if indeed that is possible for them, and take a fresh look based on logic. There is no way the mighty

army of Israel or any crack down by the Palestinian National Authority will stop suicide attacks by a group of determined people who can find no light at the end of the tunnel.

Coming as it did just before the expected arrival in the region of American troubleshooter Dennis Ross in a fresh bid to lift the logjam in the peace process, we cannot but be convinced that the perpetrators of the suicide blast only wanted to preempt any success of the Ross mission, and they did. Not that Ross was bringing any sweeping idea. Washington seems incapable of moving or even thinking in the right direction except endorsing Israeli positions, but there was a ray of hope that a U.S. intervention at this point could inject some vitality and kickstart the stalled Palestinian negotiations.

All trace of such hope has been wiped out. It would take months before any move can be expected in the peace process. And as long as there is no movement in the peace process, there will be more suicide attacks, whether in Jordan or elsewhere like it or not.

The key lies in Israeli hands — Netanyahu as his likes should realise and accept that international legitimacy rather than military might is the basis for a peace settlement with the Palestinians. As long as they do not, there cannot be any escape from the reality that "security for Israelis" will remain an elusive dream.

Good reasons for Washington to start talking with Tehran

By Richard W. Murphy

WASHINGTON — With Mohammad Khatami taking office as Iran's new president on Aug. 2, it is time for the United States to rethink its relationship with the largest country in the Gulf region.

We have been steadily, at times violently, at odds with the Iranian regime since 1979. Our distaste for Tehran's revolutionary clerics started with the embassy hostage crisis that same year. The Iran-contras episode in 1986 convinced most U.S. policymakers that dealing with Iran inevitably meant embarrassment for America.

We still have real problems with the regime over its support for international terrorism, its nuclear weapons ambitions and its opposition to the Arab-Israeli peace process. It is now clear, however, that we will make little progress on these issues unless we engage the Iranians in serious high-level negotiations without preconditions.

I propose that in the coming months the United States offer the Iranians talks at the level of deputy secretary of state or under-secretary of state. Such talks would put our exchanges on a new footing, granting the Islamic regime a legitimacy that we have withheld until now.

Our current policy of containment boils down to shunning Iran as a "rogue regime." This is not viable for the long run, and it does not take into account the complex and often positive Iranian roles in Central Asia and the Middle East. In Tajikistan, for example, the Iranians helped mediate last month's peace agreement between the belligerents in the civil war.

Iran is also a guarantor of the agreement.

In the case of the Gulf war, the Iranians opposed the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and have supported U.N. Security Council sanctions imposed on Iraq.

The election of a new president affords the opportunity to establish a productive dialogue.

Washington was surprised when Mr. Khatami won an overwhelming 69 per cent of the popular vote on May 23. The regime's preferred candidate, Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, the speaker of parliament, was expected to win. Mr. Khatami's victory was a protest vote against the regime and a generalised expression of hope for social and economic change (less ideology, more jobs) sought primarily by Iranian women and youth.

U.S. economic sanctions have probably played some role in pressuring the regime and at the same time impoverishing the population, but the major factors depressing the economy have been the regime's corruption and mismanagement.

It is wrong to conclude that Mr. Khatami won because of U.S. containment policy, and that all we need do is keep the pressure on to "help Khatami." Through direct contact we will be better able to anticipate events while continuing to operate as the dominant power in the world and in the Gulf.

Improvement in relations between the United States and Iran will be slow and difficult to achieve, but it could benefit both countries as well as the Middle East as a whole. Until we probe, we cannot know what substance there is behind the indications that Mr.

Khatami's election could lead Iran to more normal dealings with us.

It will not be easy to bring about change. Mr. Khatami's freedom to alter Iran's approach may be limited. His domestic critics will say that we still seek the overthrow of the Islamic regime and intend to block its rightful role in Gulf security.

Nonetheless, while it is early to talk of an Iranian warming towards us, Mr. Khatami's recent statements have been strikingly conciliatory towards the West. His cabinet choices will provide some concrete evidence of whether he has the necessary mandate from Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to make revisions in foreign and domestic policy.

President Bill Clinton has expressed hope for improved relations. But his flexibility is constrained by legislation sanctioning Iran as a "state supporting terrorism." He must also heed Israel's concerns and those of some of our Arab allies.

Another stumbling block is the ongoing investigation into allegations that Iran was involved in last year's Khobar bombing in Saudi Arabia, which killed 19 American servicemen. That investigation may end with no clear conclusion as to responsibility. If the evidence proves official Iranian authorship, our relations will return to the freezing point.

Mr. Clinton's statement after the election was the most gracious about Iran in many years. Describing the vote as a reaffirmation of the democratic process there, he said he had "never been pleased about the estrangement between the people of the United States and the people of Iran."

who are very great people."

However, he also cited concerns about support for terrorism, violent subversion of the Middle East peace process and acquiring nuclear weapons.

Eventually, all U.S.-Iranian differences must be discussed. A promising place to begin might be a quiet exploration of our allegations about Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions.

Late last month, General Binford Peay, who heads the U.S. Central Command, which has responsibility for American forces in the Gulf, estimated that Iran could have nuclear arms by the end of the century. This estimate may not represent a full consensus among administration experts, but it is one measure of the urgency felt in Washington about this problem.

Iran is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and has made positive statements about its readiness for international inspections. Negotiators can build on this.

Arms control is another reason to take advantage of a potential opening for dialogue. The Arab-Israeli peace process set up by the 1991 Madrid conference provided for multilateral talks on arms control. These talks excluded Iraq and Iran. The negotiations have been stalled for the past two-and-a-half years because of the Egyptian demand that Israel agree to discuss its own nuclear programme.

Whenever these talks restart, it must be recognised that there can be no effective arms control regime in the region unless Iran and, eventually, Iraq participate.

Any sustained diplomatic engagement with Iran would face congressional

opposition. For more than a decade, not a single U.S. representative or senator has visited Tehran. The swift passage of the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996, meanwhile, owed much to the still unexplained explosion of TWA Flight 800 a few weeks earlier.

Americans who favour maintaining the U.S.-Iranian status quo assert that no new engagement is necessary. They say Iran has known for at least a decade what it must do to improve relations with the United States, and that appropriate diplomatic channels remain open for Iranian use. This is only half true.

I helped prepare the State Department's post-fragrant formulation in the late 1980s. The United States was ready, we said, to have a dialogue about our differences with an "authorised Iranian representative." This was designed to prevent the kind of unauthorised back alley negotiations that backfired so disastrously in the Iran-contras scandal.

After more than a decade of repetition, coupled with our harsh public rhetoric about Iranian actions and intentions, this invitation is unpersuasive. High officials in Tehran likely assume that all we have in mind is a meeting where we would present our charges and tell them to return when they have corrected their behaviour.

For different reasons, Israel and some of our major Gulf Arab allies have been comfortable with our policy towards Iran to date. Some of them will be uneasy if we try to warm up the U.S.-Iranian relationship. The Israelis worry about

Iran's nuclear ambitions and long-range ballistic missile programme. They also accuse Iran of sponsoring violent opposition to the Arab-Israeli peace process. We share these concerns, both of which can best be dealt with in the context of open dialogue.

Our Arabian Peninsula allies worry that Iran's power relative to Iraq has grown since the Gulf war. A majority of Gulf Arab leaders agree that the Islamic Republic has been more aggressive towards them than the shah was. "Smile and subvert" is how one Arab foreign minister described to me Iran's policy towards his country.

Yet several Gulf Arab leaders have told me privately that they concur with the proposition that improved U.S.-Iranian relations would be in their countries' interest.

Although they welcome our support and although Desert Storm reinforced America's credibility as their guarantor against external aggression, they do not know how long we will stay around, and they are condemned to live with Iran as their neighbour.

Iranian leaders see their country as the major Gulf power. Their ambitions for Gulf leadership match the shah's. They resent our hegemony in the region. They want us to withdraw our forces but know that it is not going to happen.

The writer, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, was U.S. assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs from 1983 to 1989, and earlier served as ambassador to Syria and Saudi Arabia. This article is reprinted from The Washington Post.

Tycoons put pressure on Yeltsin's liberal 'heir'

MOSCOW (R) — Boris Nemtsov, the 37-year-old boy wonder of Russian liberal reforms, has endured his biggest test in four short months in government as media owned by wealthy government backers have turned their fire on him.

He has a good chance of surviving the ordeal with his presidential ambitions intact, analysts said. But it is too soon to predict the outcome of the struggle, which could set the course of Russia's economic and political development for years.

Since President Boris Yeltsin formed an effectively new government under veteran Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin in March and gave two posts of first deputy prime minister to Mr. Nemtsov and Anatoly Chubais, the cabinet has scored a number of economic successes and appeared to work in unity.

Mr. Nemtsov, unlike the unpopular Chubais, has harked in media attention.

But his detractors gave the clearest sign yet on Thursday they want to nip in the bud a

strategy engineered, according to Kremlin sources, by Mr. Chubais to appoint Mr. Nemtsov as the heir apparent to Mr. Yeltsin.

A spokesman for one of Mr. Nemtsov's wealthy opponents criticised Mr. Yeltsin for appearing too often on television "fondly stroking the head of his political grandson" and suggesting the head of state should slap down the young liberals around him.

Mr. Nemtsov, whom Mr. Yeltsin tipped as a possible successor even before summoning him from the provinces to Moscow in March, has been accused of colluding with the consortium that won a stake in state telecoms company Svyazinvest at an auction last Friday.

Mr. Nemtsov said the losers in the bidding were having "hysterics" and accused them of resisting attempts to clean up the previously murky privatisation process.

Vladimir Gusinsky, one of two businessmen who government sources said backed

the losing Svyazinvest bid, denied on Thursday he was involved in the auction. The other, Boris Berezovsky, who is on secondment to Mr. Yeltsin's security council, has not commented.

Mr. Gusinsky's spokesman Vyacheslav Kostikov, once Mr. Yeltsin's own press secretary, called the auction a scandal and urged Mr. Chernomyrdin and Mr. Yeltsin to act.

The row marks the final breakdown of an alliance formed last year by powerful banking and media bosses and Mr. Chubais, then Mr. Yeltsin's campaign chief, to ensure the president's reelection.

In part, money is at the root of it. Some of the tycoons are angry that Mr. Chubais has changed the rules on privatisation. But, as Mr. Kostikov said, this concerns politics as much as commerce.

Mr. Nemtsov said this week that the reaction of the losers, whom he branded "robber capitalists," may lead them to ally themselves with the Communist and nationalist opposition against the

government.

But analysts said the immediate battle lines appeared rather to be drawn within the government, with stolid former gas industry boss

Chernomyrdin, 58, on one side and the liberal reformers led by Mr. Chubais, 42, on the other.

The two men have insisted since Mr. Chubais joined the cabinet from Mr. Yeltsin's office in March that they are working together. Mr. Chernomyrdin is in his fifth year as prime minister and would have the support of many business leaders to succeed Mr. Yeltsin.

However, Mr. Chubais has been very much in the ascendency this year, helped by the president's return to health after heart surgery and his stated determination to see through market reforms before his final term ends in 2000.

Kremlin sources say Mr. Chubais, whose deep unpopularity with voters rules him out of the election himself, has begun to push the telegraphic Nemtsov as Mr.

But some analysts say Mr. Gusinsky and Mr. Berezovsky appear to have thrown their weight behind Mr. Chernomyrdin.

Last week Mr. Chernomyrdin criticised liberal privatisation chief Alfred Kokh, and this week he ordered an inquiry into the Svyazinvest deal. Mr. Kostikov forecast "experienced" politicians would disassociate themselves from it, leaving the "activists" isolated.

But Mr. Chernomyrdin has yet to commit himself openly to splitting the cabinet and it is far from clear he will do so.

Mr. Kostikov warned darkly that Mr. Yeltsin was a man with a record of throwing out advisers and said he could react to the present "scandal" by reasserting himself at the expense of his current inner circle.

But other commentators said Mr. Chubais — and hence Mr. Nemtsov — was in a strong position with the 66-year-old Kremlin leader.

"I would expect Chubais and Yeltsin to clamp down on

Chernomyrdin and Berezovsky," Anders Aslund of the Carnegie Endowment, a former Kremlin economic adviser, told Reuters. "Liberal market reforms will continue."

The liberal weekly Oshchaya Gazeta commented that Mr. Chubais was too skilled a political operator to have left himself exposed to attack and prone to a change of heart by Mr. Yeltsin.

"The only one who might hurt him is the president. But Yeltsin, no matter how highly he thinks of Berezovsky and Gusinsky, will not sacrifice their sake," it said, naming Mr. Chubais, Mr. Nemtsov and two others.

The testing times may be far from over for Mr. Nemtsov, however.

One Kremlin source told Reuters that Mr. Chubais himself planned to see how his popular protégé coped in the dirtier end of Russian politics. Whether last week's row was what he had in mind is not at all clear. But it is certainly testing Mr. Nemtsov's

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Meridor: This is a positive process that will probably be completed with the rest of the Arab countries, secure the existence of Israel

Israeli ex-minister of finance, believes that the peace process should be revived to secure a model of "life together". His resignation, he says, was brought about by the way things were "managed" by Premier Netanyahu. He says an improved Palestinian economy will be for the benefit of all sides and that the "on-hold" situation the peace process is in should be broken to make way to a "gradual road" towards peace. Daphne Barak interviews him.



Dan Meridor

QUESTION: How do you feel about your resignation?

ANSWER: I have no uncertainties. Q: Could you describe "the morning after" (the resignation)?

A: There was no emptiness, there were many meetings with people who wanted to talk about the situation, about my resignation. Of course, it was less crowded.

As minister of finance I would work 16-17 hours a day. Sometimes I would hold 15 different meetings in one day. I did not leave because I did not enjoy it. On the contrary, I really liked the office, the people working there — they are high level people, the work gets done there without small politics.

At the party, I mean the final meeting I held when I left, a senior employee there said: "We never had such an apolitical minister." I consider that a great compliment.

Q: Regarding foreign policy, for some reasons,

you have been labelled as a moderate. Is that right?

A: Look, it is now exactly 20 years since the first discussions were held between Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat, Egypt, and later Jordan, signed peace with us. We began talking with the Palestinians at the 1991 Madrid conference. The same with Syria, Morocco is now open to Israelis. This is a positive process that will probably be completed with the rest of the Arab countries, that will secure the existence of the state of Israel, with a readiness to build an example of life together.

At the same time, there is a Muslim extremist section — Iraq, Iran and

Libya — which develops non-conventional arms, supports terrorist organizations and represents a threat to peace.

Q: The Oslo agreement, is it good for the Jewish (Israeli) people?

A: It was not a good agreement. It created very high expectations for the Palestinians, and it created a timetable — until May 1999 — within which solutions must be reached to all the complicated problems, to most emotional issues.

Q: Which are they in your opinion?

A: The future of Jerusalem, Arab refugees, final borders. It was a kind of "buy now-pay later" agreement; first the

agreement was reached, they received the Nobel Prize, then...

Q: Do you support Netanyahu's suggestion to end the stage system and discuss the end of the agreements immediately?

A: No, no, no. There is a logic to the gradual concept. We need to go in two directions at the same time: maintain discussions while being both flexible and stubborn, when needed. But if the Arab side does not show flexibility, there will be no agreement. Up to now they have only received. It is necessary to take the gradual road of (giving) more and more power to the Palestinian National Authority.

Q: Which means you do not support the Palestinian state?

A: For the time being it is an authority. So then two things will happen: slowly the area in their hands will grow. No, do not press me into the direction of percentages. And their economic situation must be improved; we are not interested in their being poor and frustrated. A healthy socio-economic situation must be created. But what is clear is that there will be crisis and drawbacks. But every drawback should not bring about terror, mines. A situation must be created where they have something to lose if the process breaks down. And this is only a gradual road.

Q: How would you describe the stage where the "peace process" is at today?

A: It is on an on-hold

situation; there are hardly any contacts, the process must be renewed.

Q: Are you for its renewal?

A: Yes, I believe that the process must be reopened regarding all the practical issues: policy matters, economic matters and cooperation in security matters.

Q: Ariel Sharon unexpectedly met with Abu Mazen. Did you meet with any top Palestinians?

A: I had many meetings with Nabil Shaath.

Q: What about Yasser Arafat?

A: I did not meet with him. At one time I was asked by Arafat's side to meet him.

Q: And?

A: The prime minister thought that the time was not right.

Q: How can the problem of Jerusalem be solved?

A: It must remain under Israeli sovereignty, but it must have Arabs and Jews living together like other Israeli cities: Upper and Lower Nazareth, Lod. Equal distribution must take place (between Arabs and Jews) of the infrastructure and the resources. At my initiative, the government transferred 130 million shekels for infrastructure in East Jerusalem. I hope this trend will continue.

Q: What do you call the step you took that caused a turmoil in the area's politics: resigning or being fired?

A: I took the step, I resigned. Although I do not believe there was great sorrow at the prime minister's office when it

happened. Quite a few things were done that could have been avoided. I could not stand it any more.

Q: If elections were announced, would you run for leadership of the Likud Party?

A: I have already said that the Likud needs a different candidate. Regarding the next elections, I am still considering. When the right moment comes, I will announce it.

Q: It seems as if you have already begun your campaign.

A: When I feel it is the right moment, I will announce it.

Q: What is actually a "politician"?

A: I do not like the term "politician"; there is no such profession. I am a lawyer by profession. It is a person who deals with the public's needs. The word politician, however, has been stuck with connotations of power.

Q: The politics you knew (in Menachem Begin's time) were different?

A: There is a certain cynicism that has got stronger. We must go back to the straight, honest road.

Q: Another change seen in Israel is the inclusion of the women, the family, in politics.

A: Not me! My wife and children do not give interviews about me and I do not give interviews about them. Politics and the family must be kept separate, for many reasons.

Q: Which, for example?

A: Why doesn't anyone ask a doctor, a lawyer, an

interviewer like you, what their partners do? There is something very provincial, very low-class in all that. I am glad my wife has her own occupation. If she is interviewed, it is on her own professional matters, not because of me.

Q: You grew up in a Revisionist home.

A: Of course we grew up with a love for Eretz-Israel, for the miracle of Zionism, for the Hebrew language and its songs. But the impression of the Zionist revolution did not take away from the European culture in our education: Antique Greece, Rome, England, Scandinavia.

Q: Did you always want to be a lawyer?

A: My father was a lawyer, so it is natural that I wanted to follow in his footsteps. At one time I contemplated the idea of studying medicine.

Q: What is your greatest worry if Netanyahu manages to stay on?

A: Let's think positively: historically, 800,000 immigrants came from the old Soviet Union to Israel. That is just a dream come true. If we do not give them an income, enable them to adapt socially, it will be a very big waste and it will cause serious historical damage.

I am worried about the stubbornness of Israeli society, the growing clashes about religion, culture, racial background. It is very important that we complete the writing of the Israeli constitution, to make sure that there will be a democratic nation focused on the people. I pushed in this direction, now it has stopped.

We must continue and move ahead with the peace process.

I hope the economic process that we started will go on, that favouritism is stopped, that economy opens to international competition and that such areas like hi-tech, telecommunications, micro-biology develop.

Q: How do you explain — and many still do not understand — that you did not resign because of the Bar On affair and that you chose to resign over an economic issue?

A: It's just not true. In the Bar On affair my role was in the fact that his appointment did not go through. But I did say: Whatever the legal advisor decides at the investigation, I will accept. They investigated for three months, tens of witnesses, and what did they say in the end? "There is doubt."

Doubt was there before the investigation took place. They did not remove the doubt, so who am I to contradict the conclusion of the legal advisor?

I wanted to be fair to the prime minister, despite the fact that he did not behave as I expected him to. To my regret, it was not only his outlook on economy: all the way, things were managed in a manner... That's why I left.

Latin America braces for 'El Nino' havoc

By Andrew Cawthorne
Reuter

LIMA — The quaint nickname of the weather phenomenon "El Nino", given by Peruvian fishermen after the baby Jesus because it tends to arrive at Christmas, belies the chaos it brings to economically vulnerable Latin America.

El Nino's already developing freak wind patterns and overheating of the Pacific Ocean threaten to produce a trail of havoc well into 1998 from flooding, droughts and disrupted agriculture and fishing patterns throughout the region.

"From the evidence so far, there's no way that this couldn't continue to develop and be a major El Nino," said Michael Halpert, a research meteorologist at the U.S. government's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Centre.

"I am sure that it can have devastating impacts, which is why we are trying to forecast it as accurately as possible and urge governments to get prepared," he added in a telephone interview from Washington.

El Nino will swell to its peak towards the end of 1997 and in the first half of 1998, with the worst affected countries likely to be Peru and Chile, on South America's Pacific coast.

Its impact will, however, be felt the length of the continent — from increased storms off western Mexico to abnormal rainfall in Argentina. And the possibility of billions of dollars of damage is worrying governments, investors and populace alike.

Chile the first major victim

Sparked by a mysteri-

ous disruption in the atmospheric system which changes wind patterns and water temperatures in the tropical Pacific, El Nino occurs with varying strength every two to seven years and lasts up to 18 months.

Its effects are already being felt.

Most dramatically, in Chile, El Nino was blamed in June for the nation's worst flooding in a decade that killed 17 people, forced 60,000 to flee their homes and seriously damaged agriculture and infrastructure.

Santiago, the capital, was drenched by more than 300 mm of rainfall in a month — more than usually falls in a year — while parts of northern Chile, which is mainly desert, received more rain in one month than normally falls in 30 years.

Worse is likely in July and August. "We expect much more extreme events in coming months than we saw in June. Rains will be heavier than normal," said meteorologist Juan Quintana, of the National Meteorological Service in Santiago.

But it wasn't all bad news for Chile. As president Eduardo Frei announced a \$165 million plan to repair flood-damage, Finance Minister Eduardo Aninat said that, far from harming the economy, renovation work should stimulate growth in the construction sector.

And local fishermen are rubbing their hands in glee at the prospect of higher catches as fish migrate south from Peru looking for cooler waters.

Already international scientists are comparing this year with notorious Ninos in 1957-1958 and 1972-1973 and say it could rival the worst this century in 1982-1983,

which caused billions of dollars of damage worldwide.

"This is a big event," said Ants Leetma, director of the U.S. Climate Prediction Centre.

Latin America's worst-hit country in the 1982-83 apparition was Peru, where hundreds died in floods and landslides, tens of thousands were left homeless and damage contributed to a 12 per cent economic downturn.

Already in Peru this year, the warmer sea has brought an Indian summer on the coast and begun to harm the nation's second most important industry, fishing, while unusually cold temperatures in the Andes have killed scores of children.

Anticipating heavy flooding in the north and droughts in the south, President Alberto Fujimori has declared nine of Peru's 24 regions in a state of emergency and earmarked \$19 million for anti-Nino preparations.

Elsewhere in Latin America, Mexico is bracing for more storms on its Pacific coast, which could affect tourist resorts and shipping sites for crude oil, grains and other products.

Central America is unlikely to be hard hit, although Panama's narrow isthmus has already experienced droughts on the Pacific side and flooding on the Atlantic.

Colombia, heavily dependent on energy from hydro-electric generators, is reporting a four degree centigrade temperature rise off its Pacific coast that could spark a severe drought from February next year.

When El Nino last hit in 1992, energy was rationed for a year in Colombia, with homes and businesses losing supplies for up to eight hours a day.

Despite the discomfort, though, many Colombians remember the experience fondly.

"People used to meet up in their homes to play cards or tell stories. It was good for family solidarity. It brought people back together again," a Colombian journalist said.

Others recounted how shopping malls, with their own generators, became magnets for residents without electricity.

Colombia's coffee-growing regions are expected to experience a significant drop in rainfall, but this is not seen affecting the crop.

"Paradoxically El Nino could be good for coffee because flowering periods are better when dry spells are longer," said agroclimatologist Orlando Guzman, of Colombia's National Centre for Coffee Research (Cenicafe).

Ecuador on alert Like Peru and Chile, Ecuador's government has put the country on alert and announced plans to spend an initial minimum \$7.5 million in prevention work.

"El Nino is imminent," said Public Works Minister Homero Torres. "We are preparing to carry out maintenance and repair work in the highways, control drainage and sewage systems, strengthening of bridges, build walls to support roads, and clean irrigation channels."

Ecuador, which suffered an estimated \$640 million damage from El Nino in 1982-83, is also anticipating damage to crops such as rice, maize, sugar, Soya and cocoa. "The effects are unpredictable, uncontrollable and unmeasurable. We cannot anticipate what strength it is going to be," said a worried Raul Morales, executive director of the agriculture chamber.

Further south, in the

larger economies of Brazil and Argentina, disruption is also expected but on a smaller scale.

Brazil anticipates higher rainfall in the south and drought in the northeast from El Nino. Its last appearance there in 1991-1992 burst river banks, killing about 30 people and forcing 100,000 to abandon their homes, and also reduced the northeast region's sugarcane harvest.

This time, the phenomenon has already brought unseasonal rains to the south, followed by an Indian summer. The extra rains, expected to return to the south in September, may have an impact on one of Brazil's key commodities — coffee.

Argentina is likely to see heavier rain in the river plate basin and more snow in the Andes, but does not expect widespread damage.

Investors in Latin America are gradually waking up to El Nino and its possible effect on economic growth this year and next, but there is no panic yet.

Rather, they are trusting that recent experiences of El Nino, the stronger state of the region's economies, better forecasting and early preparations will minimise the impact.

"I think there is a growing concern in the markets about El Nino. It is just starting to get across people's radar screens," said William Romary, senior Latin American economist for UBS Securities.

"But it is very hard to judge the economic impact until we know in August, September just how bad it is going to be."

Analysts say the effects of El Nino could knock half to one percentage point off the gross domestic product (GDP) growth of the worst affected countries,

like Peru and Chile. "But I don't expect it to affect the overall growth rate of the region, as

Cbile and Peru have relatively small economies compared to Mexico, Argentina and Brazil,

which will remain largely unaffected," Mr. Romary said.

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Arab Gulf countries urged to reform investment laws

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Gulf states must reform investment laws to attract the foreign capital needed to bring in new technology and ensure funds for growing development needs, regional officials have said.

Because of restrictions on foreign ownership, red-tape and ambiguity in incentive and tax systems, Arab Gulf countries rank among the least attractive nations for foreign capital.

And that is despite the enormous oil wealth of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), cheap labour and its proximity to a vast Asian consumer market.

While such fast-growing Asian economies as China and Malaysia reaped more than 40 per cent of the total capital flow into developing countries of around \$100 billion in 1995, GCC states accounted for under one per cent.

"I do not think I am saying anything new when I say the investment climate is a major stumbling-block to capital movements into our region," said Khaled Al Fayez, chief executive of the Gulf Investment Corporation, which is owned by most Arab governments.

"What I am highlighting here is the need for detailed studies which focus on the various constituents of the investment climate," he said in a study published in the London-based Arab Bankers quarterly magazine.

"Laws which govern the allocation and movement of factors of production, particularly capital, must be reviewed... Laws that do not make any more sense must be dropped," he said.

"In case of incentives as well as the legal environment, we must have an eye on what others are providing in order to be competitive," Mr. Fayez emphasised.

The GCC states — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — have sought to improve investment laws but have maintained curbs on foreign ownership as well as on the purchase of real estate and activities by expatriate investors in some sectors.

They also still lack well-defined incentives and tax laws.

The GCC's main economic partners — Japan, the European Union and the United States — have cited terms for a 51 per cent local partnership in any project in the region as

a key reason for their reluctance to commit to major projects.

GCC states need foreign capital to acquire technology for economic diversification and to fund oil and other development projects as a decline in oil prices over the past decade has slashed their income and turned them from pure capital exporters to importers.

"Most GCC countries are suffering from a shortage in financing for development projects," said Mohammad Khawajkieh, an expert at the Doha-based Gulf Organisation for Industrial Consulting, which advises on industrial policies in the GCC.

"They can no longer depend on government investments to face such needs, which run into hun-

dreds of billions of dollars," he said.

"This underscores the need for foreign capital. But GCC states should develop strategies to encourage foreign investment and attract part of the private Gulf assets overseas of more than \$200 billion," Mr. Fayez added.

His study showed that direct foreign investment in the GCC stood at around \$1.2 billion in 1995, compared with around \$37 billion in China alone and \$5.8 billion in Malaysia.

"China, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan have accounted for between 60 and 80 per cent of the total direct investment in the developing nations since 1977, compared with a negligible share in the GCC," he said.

Nigeria again tops survey list of corrupt nations

BERLIN (R) — Nigeria, Bolivia and Colombia are considered by businesspeople and political analysts the most corrupt among 52 countries listed in a survey published in Berlin.

But the authors, Berlin-based anti-corruption watchdog Transparency International (TI) said it was a myth that Western industrialised democracies were immune to widespread bribery, kickbacks and influence peddling.

The survey, in its third year, draws its conclusions from up to seven different business surveys in each country to evaluate how business people, political analysts and the general public perceived the degree of corruption in a country.

TI said only 52 countries provided sufficient data, meaning Nigeria was unlikely to be the most corrupt country in the world.

On a scale of zero, for utterly corrupt, to 10, for completely corruption-free, Nigeria was rated 1.76 — keeping it in the worst slot on the list for a second year running — followed by Bolivia with 2.05 and Colombia at 2.23.

Denmark came first with a 9.94 honesty rating, Finland second with 9.48 and Sweden third with 9.35. New Zealand dropped to fourth place from first this year with a 9.23 rating.

Russia had the worst reputation for corruption among major economies, coming in as fourth most corrupt of the 52 surveyed nations. India was ranked eighth and China 12th most corrupt.

TI said some wealthy nations, including Germany, fostered corruption by allowing companies to register bribe payments to foreign firms as "useful expenses" which could be written off against taxes.

Among the Group of Seven leading global industrial powers, Canada was ranked highest in the honesty stakes at 5th. Germany 13th, Britain 14th, the United States 16th, France 20th, Japan 21st and Italy 30th.

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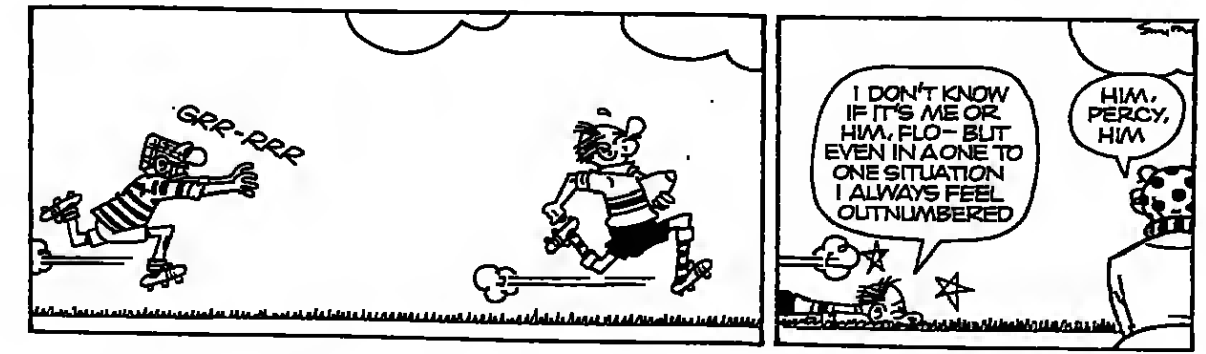
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Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	HKD	NTD	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.6288	0.5975	1.4994	115.87	1.3626	1781.00	2.0602	6.1680
DE Mark	0.5468	-	0.3264	0.8191	63.34	0.7538	973.33	1.1264	3.3713
GB Sterling	1.6736	3.0625	-	2.5070	193.90	2.3130	2979.97	3.4471	10.3176
CH Franc	0.6669	1.2159	0.3981	-	77.25	0.9225	1167.57	137.68	4.1063
JP Yen	0.0086	1.5776	0.5154	1.2934	-	1.1929	16.35	177.62	5.3178
CA Dollar	0.7233	1.3239	0.4321	1.0821	1.19	-	1287.73	1.4905	4.4620
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0280	0.3362	0.0841	1539.41	0.7755	-	11.55	3.4585
NL Guilder	0.4854	0.8873	0.2859	0.7279	56.19	0.6711	863.38	-	2.9910
FR Franc	0.1821	0.2965	0.0968	0.2486	16.76	0.2242	33.38	33.3800	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LEB	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7506	0.3770	3.6400	0.3037	3.6728	1540.00	3.3925
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	-	5.2975	0.5325	5.1412	0.4289	5.1876	2175.14	4.7917
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1858	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0810	0.98	410.60	0.9045
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8780	9.9488	-	9.86	0.8055	9.74	4084.99	9.9989
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0304	1.0304	-	0.0834	1.01	423.08	0.3320
Kuwait Dinar	3.2933	2.3316	12.3517	1.2415	11.99	-	12.10	5071.63	0.3320
Emirate Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0212	1.0206	0.9911	0.0827	-	419.30	0.9237
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4597	2.4355	0.2448	2.3636	0.1972	2.3849	-	2.2029
Egyptian	0.2948	0.2087	1.1058	0.1111	1.0730	0.0895	1.0828	453.94	-

Energy									
Oil	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	HKD	NTD	FRF
Brent	19.13	19.16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
W. Texas	19.67	19.20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bonny	19.13	19.16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dubai	17.20	17.30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
U.L. Gas	192.00	165.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	HKD	NTD	FRF
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4876	0.15935	0.39994	30.9014	-	-	-	-
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.49808	0.16273	0.40841	31.5567	-	-	-	-
KW Dinar	3.2933	6.0241	1.56812	4.94071	381.779	-	-	-	-
BH Dinar	0.3770	0.84201	1.58529	3.97831	307.400	-	-	-	-
CY Pound	1.3646	3.4089	1.1133	2.7927	216.002	-	-	-	-

Metal Prices									
Metal	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	HKD	NTD	FRF
Gold (oz's)	322.4	322.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Silver (oz's)	4.29	4.31	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Platinum (oz's)	418	421	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
AL (3 Months)	1851	1652	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CU (3 Months)	2287	2289	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Zinc (3 Months)	1571	1572	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lead (3 Months)	643	645	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ni (3 Months)	6770	6775	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	HKD	NTD	FRF
USD	5.50	5.80	5.71	5.75	5.85	-	-	-	-
GBP	6.75	6.81	7.10	7.37	7.34	-	-	-	-
JPY	0.41	0.85	0.48	0.53	0.75	-	-	-	-
DEM	3.06	3.12	3.18	3.25	3.34	-	-	-	-
FRF	3.21	3.28	3.35	3.45	3.52	-	-	-	-
CHF	1.43	1.50	1.54	1.40	1.82	-	-	-	-
ITL	6.94	6.84	6.72	6.55	6.40	-	-	-	-

Main Equity Indices									
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls	Open	Close
New York	OWJ JONES	8003.81	-84.55	-1.05	8099.04	7999.4	8088.36	-	-
New York	S&P 500	928.43	-8.13	-0.87	937.83	926.91	936.56	-	-
London	FT-SE 100	4862.9	-11.6	-0.24	4897.7	4855.4	4874.5	-	-
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	20286.23	155.72	0.77	20290.2	20164.3	20130.5	-	-
Paris	CAC 40	2973.53	-30	-1	3024.67	2969.13	3003.53	-	-
Frankfurt	DAX	4335.74	-70.35	-1.6	4411.84	4331.91	4406.09	-	-

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

1 Swift horse
 5 Swedish rock group
 9 Lute's kin
 14 "Cool Hand" —
 15 Tress
 16 Sun-dried brick
 17 Leave out
 18 Baby's bed
 19 Like some floors
 20 In no way
 21 Restore to health
 22 Mischievous dwarfs
 23 Steinbeck novel (with "The")
 26 Mine output
 27 Corded fabric
 28 CIA forerunner
 31 Roan, e.g.
 34 Level
 36 Authority
 37 Potter/Dee film
 40 Deeply moved
 41 Discusses freely
 42 Like krypton
 43 Yale student
 44 "Krazy" —
 45 Vane dir.
 46 Ray Bradbury novel
 53 Java
 55 Whirlpool
 56 2,000 pounds
 57 Author Loos
 58 Noodle
 59 Lyric poet
 60 Bugged down
 61 Suffer
 62 Otherwise
 63 Gang and mob end
 64 Like a racahorse
 65 Tinted

DOWN

1 Onward
 2 Gossip
 3 Japanese port
 4 Track deal
 5 Charge
 6 Small donkey
 7 Concise
 8 Priest's robe
 9 Petty ruler
 10 Foolish person
 11 Kind of cookie
 12 Cain's victim
 13 Warren Beatty film
 21 Goddess of grain
 22 Council city
 24 Put forward
 25 Songbirds
 29 Disparaging remark
 30 Transmitted
 31 Lagomorph
 32 Certain exam
 33 Fusillade
 34 Growing outward
 35 Bigwig
 36 Take up again
 38 Turkish decree
 39 Kin of 6D
 44 Massage
 45 Dozed momentarily
 47 In quest of
 48 Parasite
 49 Gem Slate
 50 Boot country
 51 Scandinavian
 52 Over
 53 Multiply curved wheels
 54 "Step —"
 58 Possesses
 59 Four-poster, e.g.

by Stanley B. Whitten

O	C	A	L	A	A	P	O	C	H	I	T		
P	A	L	E	R	S	E	R	E	H	O	N	E	
E	S	T	E	R	S	L	A	V	A	R	N	E	
C	H	A	T	E	L	A	I	N	E	U	S	E	
				S	A	I	G	R	E	V	E	R	
T	R	A	C	T	S	A	I	G	R	E	V	E	R
R	U	S	H	E	S	N	E	S	N	O	R	E	
A	S	T	A	I	R	E	S	T	E	I	G	E	R
Y	E	A	T	S	A	S	T	O	S	L	A	G	
				T	E	E	N	E	E	N	E	R	
R	E	D	E	E	M	B	R	I	G	A	T	E	R
O	D	O	R	C	H	A	U	T	A	U	O	U	A
B	E	N	T	E	C	H	A	R	L	T	R	O	S
O	M	O	O	E	R	I	E	E	D	I	N	A	
T	A	R	N	M	S	S	S	U	D	A	N		

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HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, AUGUST 2, 1997

By Thomas S. Elverson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Be sure you aren't forgetting any promises you have made this morning. You can improve your efficiency with more modern techniques, which when implemented will make your career activities much more successful.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You should not pass off a duty today which is rightfully yours on a fellow associate, or you will greatly regret it. A superior can help your financial situation, by suggesting methods of operation which can be quite fruitful.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Complete any career activities you have committed yourself to early today, then you will have time for recreational activities which are enjoyable. Listen to your mate's suggestions for becoming quite successful.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You should not neglect important business matters today in order to have some fun. Later this evening would be best spent with your mate at home and relaxing with your loved ones for the hectic days ahead.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Avoid becoming involved in a disagreement between your mate and a good friend or you could hurt the feelings of one of them. You should not stay out too late this evening, as you need your rest for any career activities ahead.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) This morning is a good time today to take care of the little chores you have been putting off. Do a favour for a superior who is in a jam and he or she will show great appreciation for your kindness.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Show more affection for your mate than usual today, however, don't take on any extra financial burdens which could leave you short of funds. Make plans for entertaining during the days ahead and become the perfect host.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) If a condition at home is upsetting you today, work it out rationally instead of losing your temper, which will do absolutely no good. Be cautious about who you invite to your home, so that a conflict doesn't develop.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you have to make some changes in your budget today, you may need advice from an expert. You should not take any risks while driving on the highway later this evening, thereby avoiding any difficulties.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You should not reveal any important financial matters today to a person you don't know very well, or this person could steal your ideas. Try to make your daily routines more efficient and thereby get noticed by a bigwig.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Be sure you don't do anything today which could upset a superior and cause you great difficulty in the process. Go out on the town for some fun recreational activities with close friends later this evening.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Your intuition is not very good this morning, so don't rely on it when making important decision or you could make the wrong one. Put more trust in your mate's abilities and thereby you can become quite successful.

Business

Conflicting expectations law boosts

Business & Finance

Jordan Times, Saturday, August 2, 1997

Conflicting expectations on foreign equity law boosts trading, prices at AFM

By Samir Ghawri
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Contradictory reports, concerning a recommendation to raise the percentage of foreign equity in Jordanian public shareholding companies were behind the rise in turnover and share prices at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) last week, the general manager of a brokerage firm told the Jordan Times Thursday.

"There was no reliable information on the level of progress achieved with regard to the law on foreign equity and whether it was approved by the Cabinet," the general manager said, pointing out that the shares of the Arab Bank and the Jordan Islamic Bank were mostly traded at higher prices on the back of conflicting news that swept the market in this regard.

Trading at the AFM amounted to JD6.12 million, seven per cent higher than the total of JD5.7 million recorded in the preceding week. The banking sector, which ranked in second place, accounted for JD2.53

million or 41.3 per cent of the total volume with the traded shares of both the Arab Bank and the Jordan Islamic Bank amounting to about JD1.41 million.

Industrial shares topped the list with a trade volume of JD2.85 million representing 46.6 per cent of the total. In third place the services sector recorded JD0.72 million (11.8 per cent) and was followed by the insurance sector with a total of JD0.16 million (2.6 per cent).

The total number of shares traded last week was 2.7 million shares that were executed through 3,022 contracts. The average daily turnover over the five days of trading amounted to JD1.2 million compared to JD1.1 million in the preceding week.

The general price index rose by 1.14 points from 165.73 points to reach 166.87 points last week. Sectionally, the price index for the banking sector increased by 3.85 points (1.79 per cent), for the services sector by 0.54 points and for the insurance sector by 0.06 points. The

industrial index, however, was lower by one point.

Comparing the prices of 88 companies whose shares were traded last week with the prices of the preceding week, the results improved for 36 firms, were lower for 29 companies while remaining stable for the remaining 23 companies.

The general manager of the brokerage firm predicted the volume of trading and the prices of shares to continue rising gradually until the end of this year.

He cited as factors for the perceived improvement better mid-year financial results being revealed by public shareholding companies and the almost inevitable decline in interest rates over the coming few months.

He saw higher trade potential and better ties with Iraq as another factor in addition to strong and high foreign exchange reserves at the Central Bank of Jordan and the passage of the law on foreign equity percentage in Jordanian companies.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Dealers cite many factors for recession in the real estate market

** ACCORDING TO many real estate dealers and officials, high interest rates and low purchasing power are behind a state of recession in the real estate market.

Samir Abu Dosh, owner of a real estate office, said the general situation in the real estate market is very bad and attributed that to the high interest rate which discourages traders from investment. He added that the low purchasing power and the routine that persists at government departments dealing with real estate do hinder transactions and cause resentment among foreign investors.

Mustafa Adwan, another dealer, said the real estate market was suffering from some recession since the beginning of the year but has recovered some activity since the start of the summer and the return of expatriates. He indicated that the government shows keenness to develop this sector and that the concerned departments facilitate the procedures of selling and buying real estate.

Another trader attributed the recession to the unorganised real estate business, the large number of apartments on offer and the unfair competition which has led to the real estate sector being overcrowded with intermediaries. He noted that there are monopolisers, especially in western Amman, who sell a plot of land for big money and invest a portion of that amount in

housing units at prices that suit those investors. This has resulted in more than 50,000 vacant apartments that can be found in western Amman alone," he emphasised.

The trader added that middle-income groups cannot afford to buy an apartment because of the high price which averages about JD30,000. "This amount is above the level that most people can afford and, as such, there is a recession in the real estate market," he said.

Engineer Rabee Salameh confirmed what the traders said but also pointed out that the wait-and-see attitude with regard to the peace process has negatively affected the real estate activity. Furthermore, he indicated, the high prices of land, the laws and regulations governing construction and limiting a building to a maximum of four floors in addition to the materials used in construction were other factors that influenced the real estate market and curbed the people's interest to buy.

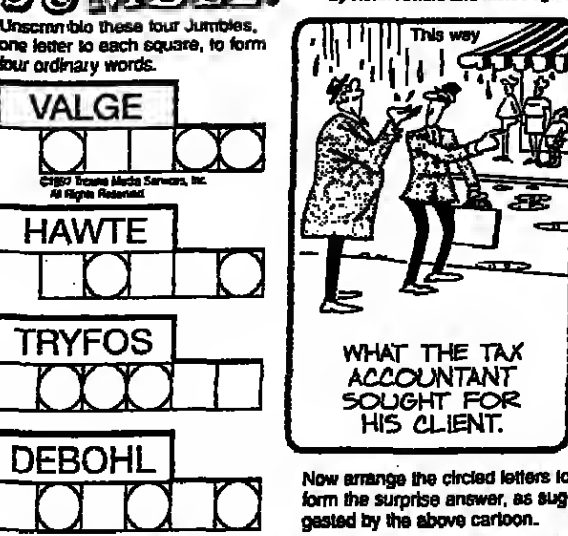
According to the financial director at the Municipality of Greater Amman, construction fees collected during the first half of this year amounted to JD1.52 million, 38 per cent less than the projected amount. Fees collected during the first half of 1996 totalled JD1.98 million (Al Arah Al Yawm).

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"I was going to order this machine that exercises every major muscle, but Stanley doesn't have any major muscles."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME



Yesterday's Jumbles: ABATE MOUSE ZODIAC SADIST
Answer: When she was stood up for lunch it left her with - A BAD TASTE

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WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Reality set to take over from hype in Athens

ATHENS (R) — After months of hype, accusation and counter-accusation, Donovan Bailey finally gets down to the serious business of defending his world 100 metres crown this weekend.

The Canadian Olympic and world champion added nothing to the much publicised but somewhat tawdry 150 metres showdown with Michael Johnson in Toronto on June 1 by his immediate post-race comments.

After Johnson pulled up with a pulled left quadriceps, which eventually kept him out of the U.S. trials, Bailey claimed: "He's just a coward, he's a chicken, he's afraid to lose."

Bailey apologised the following day, saying the pair were friends "but the build-up to the race had left the friendship strained."

The Johnson camp remained unimpressed and Bailey, who has always felt he has lacked respect from the Americans, came out of a race billed as a competition to find the world's fastest man with the reputation of a sore winner.

Bailey, who has been training late at night in the Olympic stadium here, claims he is ready to run faster than ever despite a virus and a slight hamstring injury.

"I've not been in my best form so far this season, but that will all change in Athens," he said.

"I love championship racing and advancing through the rounds helps me run faster and faster. If I run my perfect race, no one can stop me."

At stake is not only the world title, accompanied this year by \$60,000 prize money, but also an extra bonus of \$100,000 for breaking the world record.

The current mark of 9.84 seconds was set a year ago when Bailey added the Olympic title to the world title he won in Gothenburg in 1995.

Two of his main rivals, Trinidad's Ato Boldon and U.S. champion Maurice Greene, agree with Bailey that the record could fall this weekend, possibly breaking the 9.80 mark.

Greene, who ran a lifetime best of 9.90 seconds at the U.S. trials at Indianapolis in June, which he later equalled in Lausanne, believes he is capable of the gold.

"I am in great form and ready for a world record. I'm sure it will happen with the fastest people in the world running against each other," he said. "We are taking the sprint to a whole new level, it's going to take a world record to win."

Boldon and Namibia's Olympic silver medalist Frankie Fredericks both have their sights set on a 100 and 200 metres double.

"I ran both events in Stuttgart, Stockholm and Lausanne and I pride

myself on doing both in a short space of time. I certainly like my chances of attempting the double," Boldon said.

Fredericks, who won the 200 world title at Stuttgart four years ago, added: "My goal is to win the 100 and 200 double. The money isn't the main motivation for me, it's to prove I am the best in the world."

The first round of the men's 100 starts at 10.30 a.m. (0730 GMT) Saturday, with the second round scheduled for 6.50 p.m. (1550 GMT). The semifinals and final are on Sunday.

The battle for the women's title also starts on Saturday with American Marion Jones, second fastest woman in the world this year, favourite for the gold.

"It will be a sub-11 second time," she said.

With Olympic 100 champion Gail Devers, the world's fastest woman this year, running the sprint relay only and 1995 champion Gwen Torrence pulling out of the championships on Thursday, Jones' main rival will be the veteran Jamaican Merlene Ottey.

The first two golds to be awarded on Saturday will be the men's 20 kms walk and the men's shot put. Competition begins at eight a.m. (0500 GMT) with the qualifying rounds of the men's hammer.

Torrence pulls out

ATHENS (R) — World 100 metres champion Gwen Torrence has pulled out of the world Championships starting on Saturday without offering an explanation, a U.S. Team official said on Thursday.

Torrence, 32, was handed a wild card by the International Amateur Athletic Federation to defend the title she won two years ago in Gothenburg after knee and leg injuries kept her out of the U.S. trials.

But Ashland Whitfield, U.S. Track and Field's national team's co-ordinator, said on Thursday: "I got a phone call from one of her agents last night to say that Gwen had withdrawn from the championships. She did not give a specific reason and I did not ask."

Earlier this month Torrence pulled out of the Nice Grand Prix on the eve of the meeting, again without giving an explanation, and returned to the United States.

Mutola aims to set record straight

Boldon faces moment of truth

ATHENS (AFP) — There are few more resilient characters on the athletics circuit than Maria Mutola and here in August she will try and reclaim her 800 metres title she lost in dramatic fashion in 1995.

The 24-year-old Mutola, who made her first appearance in the Olympic Games aged 15, lost the chance of defending her title in 1995 when she was disqualified, after finishing first in her semi-final, for running outside of her lane too early.

The three-time world indoor champion was distraught but rebounded later in the season to break the 1,000 metres world record, with the bonus of the overall grand prix prize.

And aside from her disqualification she put together an unbeaten run of 50 800 metres races (1992-96) ended when she could only take bronze behind the astonishing Russian Svetlana Masterkova in Atlanta.

Masterkova added further insult to the injury by breaking Mutola's 1,000 metres record in Brussels later in August running 2min 28.98 — Mutola's record stood at 2:29.34.

Mutola, who started her career as a footballer in Maputo before she moved to Oregon on an Olympic scholarship, showed perhaps the greatest courage of her career when she came to Paris in March for the world indoors.

She blitzed the field to win her third title and then broke down in tears on the track as she revealed that her father had been killed in a car accident weeks before and she had not bothered to train.

"I didn't want to come. I was so upset as my father was my idol and role model," she said.

"I went back to Mozambique but I couldn't eat or do anything and said to my family what is it worth (a gold medal) in comparison to my father's life. However, they said go and win it for your father," Mutola added.

It is questionable whether Mutola can repel Masterkova, who appeared to be on a different sphere last season, but she has run the fourth fastest time this year — 1min 57.57 in Eugene — still almost two seconds short of Cuba's reigning world champion Ana Fidelia Quirot's world best time this year (1:55.78).

However with doubts surrounding Quirot's participation and Masterkova having said she will only run the 1,500 metres Mutola could once again prove that she is the 'comeback kid' of women's athletics.

ATHENS (AFP) —

Trinidad's dual Olympic bronze medalist Ato Boldon has to claim gold in either the 100 or 200 metres here at the World Championships if he is to convert his potential into actual achievement.

There is no denying the ability of the 23-year-old Boldon, who alerted his senior rivals with double gold at the 1992 world junior Games.

But he showed his immaturity in the 100 metres Olympic final last year when he blamed Linford Christie's antics, when the Briton was disqualified, for ruining his concentration — though they later made up.

The fast talking Boldon, who moved to New York at the age of 14 with his mother, could not be blamed for being run into third place in the Olympic 200 metres final as Michael Johnson blitzed the field and the world record.

And he showed his lighter more attractive side by bowing to the American after the finish.

However, Boldon, who is coached by former 440 yards world record holder John Smith, then failed to light up March's World Indoor Championships as the warm favourite collapsed with a hamstring injury in the finishing straight while American sprinter Kevin Little, who in 1989 became the first white man to represent America over the sprint distance in 13 years, took gold.

Little, who will reoppose Boldon over 200 metres in Athens, paid tribute to his opponent after the indoor final and underlined that despite the



Trinidad's Ato Boldon gestures as he replies to journalists' questions during a press conference prior to the 6th World Athletics Championships August 1. Boldon, 23, won bronze in both the 100 metres and 200 metres at the Atlanta Olympics and is competing in both events at the sixth world championships in Athens (Reuters photo)

brush exterior of the Trinidadian he is popular among his fellow athletes.

"If Ato Boldon hadn't been in this event then it would have lacked real recognition and been dismissed as a below par championship. It is to his credit that he was about the only male sprint superstar who turned up. I am only sorry that he finished it by being carried off the track," the 28-year-old little said.

Boldon, who would become the first Trinidadian to claim gold at a major championships since Hasely Crawford won the 100 metres in the 1976 Montreal Olympics, showed he was fully recovered when he won the 100 metres in 9.89 seconds at the Modesto relays in May, making him only the sixth man to run the distance in under 9.90 seconds.

Boldon, who is a sociology student at UCLA, has been running back into form after a mid-season

dip he said was because of the rainy conditions — something he should not face in Athens.

He recorded double wins in both Stockholm and Stuttgart within a week of each other in July and counted the win over 200 metres in Germany as the most important.

"It was important because Frank Fredericks was in the field and I wanted to put on a show and beat him," Boldon said.

It is fair to say that Boldon, who's popularity rose above that of his compatriot and the West Indies leading batsman Brian Lara after his Olympic performances, will need to be at his confident best to win the 100 against Donovan Bailey.

However, with Johnson opting for the 400 metres he will really have only himself to blame if he doesn't bring 200 gold back to Trinidad and justify his undoubted talent.

LEADING ATHLETICS CHAMPIONS

PARIS (AFP) — Top ten athletics performers in 1997:

Men

100 metres: World record 9.84 Donovan Bailey (Can) Atlanta 27 July 1996
Leading world performances in 1997:
9.89 Ato Boldon (Trn)
9.90 Maurice Greene (USA)
9.91 Frank Fredericks (Nam)

200m: WR 19.32 Michael Johnson (USA) Atlanta 1 Aug 1996
19.77 Ato Boldon (Trn)
19.86 Maurice Green (USA)
19.90 Frank Fredericks (Nam)

400 metres: WR 45.20 Blanch Reynolds (USA) Zurich 17 Aug 1988
43.75 Michael Johnson (USA)
44.08 Blanch Reynolds (USA)
44.46 Iwan Thomas (Gbr)

800 metres: WR 1:41.73 Sebastian Coe (Gbr) Florence 10 June 1981
1:41.73 Wilson Kipketer (Den)
1:43.20 Mark Everett
1:43.39 Patrick Nkonkhalah (Ken)

1,500 metres: WR 3min 27.37sec Noureddine Morceli (Alg) Nice 12/7/95
3:29.30 Hicham El-Guerrouj (Mar)
3:30.13 Laban Kotich (Ken)
3:30.44 John Kibowen (Ken)

5,000 metres: WR Gebreselassie 12:44.39 Zurich 16 Aug 1997
12:48.98 Daniel Komen (Ken)
12:52.39 Salah Hissou (Mar)
12:54.60 Haile Gebrselassie (Eth)

10,000 metres: WR 26:31.32 Haile Gebrselassie (Eth) Oslo 4 July 1997
26:31.32 Haile Gebrselassie (Eth)
27:17.09 Mohamed Mommeh (Bel)
27:21.53 Dieter Baumann (Ger)

3,000m steeplechase: WR 7:59.18 Moses Kiptanui (Ken) Zurich 16.08.95
8:01.80 Moses Kiptanui (Ken)
8:02.77 Wilson Bolt Kipier (Ken)
8:03.51 Bernard Bantass (Ken)

Marsalant: WR 2:00.60s Novak Djokovic (Ser) Rotterdam 27 April 1995
2:07.51 Domingos Castro (Por)
2:07.54 Alejandro Gomez (Cub)
2:07.55 Antonio Pinto (Esp)

110 metres hurdles: WR 1:29.19 Colin Jackson (Gbr) Stuttgart 20 Aug 95
1997 best:
1:29.77 Allen Johnson (USA)
1:31.11 Anier Garcia (Cub)
1:31.13 Igor Kovacs (Svk)

400 metres hurdles: WR 46.78 Kevin Young (USA) Barcelona 6 Aug 1992
47.77 Bryan Robson (USA)
47.97 Llewellyn Herbert (Rsa)
48.00 Derrick Adkins (USA)

High jump: WR 2.45m Javier Sotomayor (Cub) Salamanca 27 July 1993
2.36 Tim Forsyth (Aus)
2.35 Konstantin Manusevich (Rus)
2.34 Javier Sotomayor (Cub)

Pole vault: WR 6.14 Sergey Bubka (Ukr) Seftiere 31 July 1994
6.00 Maksim Tarasov (Rus)
5.96 Tim Lobinger (Ger)
5.91 Risan Botha (Rsa)

Long jump: WR 8.95m Mike Powell (USA) Tokyo 30 Aug 1991
8.63 Ivan Pedroso (Cub)
8.49 James Beckford (Jam)
8.49 Eric Waldner (USA)

Triple jump: WR 18.29 Jonathan Edwards (Gbr) Gothenburg 7 Aug 1995
17.74 Jonathan Edwards (Gbr)
17.64 Yoelbi Quesada (Cub)
17.51 Kenny Harrison (USA)

Shot put: WR 23.12 Randy Barnes (USA) Los Angeles 20 May 1990
22.03 Randy Barnes (USA)
21.78 Kevin Toth (USA)
21.68 John Godina (USA)

Discus: WR 74.08 Jurgen Schult (Gdr) Neubrandenburg 6 June 1986
71.50 Lars Riedel (Ger)
67.40 John Godina (USA)
66.66 Michael Mollenbeck (Ger)

Hammer: WR 86.74 Yuriy Sedykh (Rsa) Stuttgart 30 Aug 1986
83.04 Heinz Weis (Ger)
82.90 Balazs Kiss (Hun)
82.66 Andrey Abduvaliyev (Tjk)

Javelin: WR 98.48 Jan Zeleny (Cze) Jena 25 May 1996
94.02 Jan Zeleny (Cze)
90.44 Boris Henry (Ger)
89.22 Kostas Ganioudis (Grc)

Decathlon: WR 8,891 pts Dan O'Brien (USA) Tallahassee 7 Sept 1992

8,617 Edward Haimalainen (Fin)
8,604 Steve Fritz (USA)
8,582 Tomas Dvorak (Cze)

Women

100 metres: WR 10.49 Florence Griffith-Joyner (USA) Indianapolis 16 July 1988
10.89 Gail Devers (USA)
10.90 Marion Jones (USA)
10.96 Merlene Ottey (Jam)

200 metres: WR 21.34 Florence Griffith-Joyner (USA) Seoul 29 Sept 1988
22.16 Marion Jones (USA)
22.17 Zhanna Ponomareva (Ukr) (Alfina)
22.23 Melinda Gansford-Taylor (Aus)

400 metres: WR 47.60 Marita Koch (Gdr) Leningrad 4 Oct 1985
49.39 Cathy Freeman (Aus)
49.40 Marita Koch (Gdr)
49.79 Chantay Opara (Ngr) (Atlanta)

800 metres: WR 1:53.88 Jarmila Kratochvilova (Cze) Munich 26 July 1983
1:57.78 Ana Fidelia Quirot (Cub)
1:57.84 Kelly Holmes (Gbr)
1:57.95 Yekaterina Afanasyeva (Rus)

1,500 metres: WR 3:50.45 Qu Yunxia (Chn) Rome 10 Sept 1996
3:56.02 Svetlana Kuznetsova (Rus)
3:56.42 Svetlana Kuznetsova (Rus)
3:56.42 Svetlana Kuznetsova (Rus)

5,000 metres: WR 14:36.45 Fernanda Ribeiro (Por) Helsinki 22 July 1995
14:40.43 Gabriela Szabo (Rom)
14:46.83 Lydia Cherono (Ken)
14:52.23 Fernanda Ribeiro (Por)

10,000 metres: WR 29:21.78 Wang Kun (Chn) Beijing 8 Sept 1993
31:14.51 Julia Vassner (Svk)
31:28.12 Nola Carroll (Irl)
31:30.89 Annemiek Peeters (USA)

3,000m steeplechase: WR 10:00.60s Novak Djokovic (Ser) Rotterdam 27 April 1995
10:07.51 Domingos Castro (Por)
10:07.54 Alejandro Gomez (Cub)
10:07.55 Antonio Pinto (Esp)

110 metres hurdles: WR 1:29.19 Colin Jackson (Gbr) Stuttgart 20 Aug 95
1997 best:
1:29.77 Allen Johnson (USA)
1:31.11 Anier Garcia (Cub)
1:31.13 Igor Kovacs (Svk)

400 metres hurdles: WR 46.78 Kevin Young (USA) Barcelona 6 Aug 1992
47.77 Bryan Robson (USA)
47.97 Llewellyn Herbert (Rsa)
48.00 Derrick Adkins (USA)

High jump: WR 2.45m Javier Sotomayor (Cub) Salamanca 27 July 1993
2.36 Tim Forsyth (Aus)
2.35 Konstantin Manusevich (Rus)
2.34 Javier Sotomayor (Cub)

Pole vault: WR 6.14 Sergey Bubka (Ukr) Seftiere 31 July 1994
6.00 Maksim Tarasov (Rus)
5.96 Tim Lobinger (Ger)
5.91 Risan Botha (Rsa)

Long jump: WR 8.95m Mike Powell (USA) Tokyo 30 Aug 1991
8.63 Ivan Pedroso (Cub)
8.49 James Beckford (Jam)
8.49 Eric Waldner (USA)

Triple jump: WR 18.29 Jonathan Edwards (Gbr) Gothenburg 7 Aug 1995
17.74 Jonathan Edwards (Gbr)
17.64 Yoelbi Quesada (Cub)
17.51 Kenny Harrison (USA)

Shot put: WR 23.12 Randy Barnes (USA) Los Angeles 20 May 1990
22.03 Randy Barnes (USA)
21.78 Kevin Toth (USA)
21.68 John Godina (USA)

Discus: WR 76.80m Gabriele Reinsch (Gdr) Neubrandenburg 9 July 1988
68.52 Beate Peters (Gdr)
67.72 Natalya Sadova (Rus)
67.66 Franka Dietzsch (Ger)

Hammer: WR 80.00m Petra Felke (Gdr) Potsdam 8 Sept 1988
69.66 Tigran Hovhannissian (Arm)
68.24 Anna Bisset (Cub)
67.32 Mikaela Ingberg (Fin)

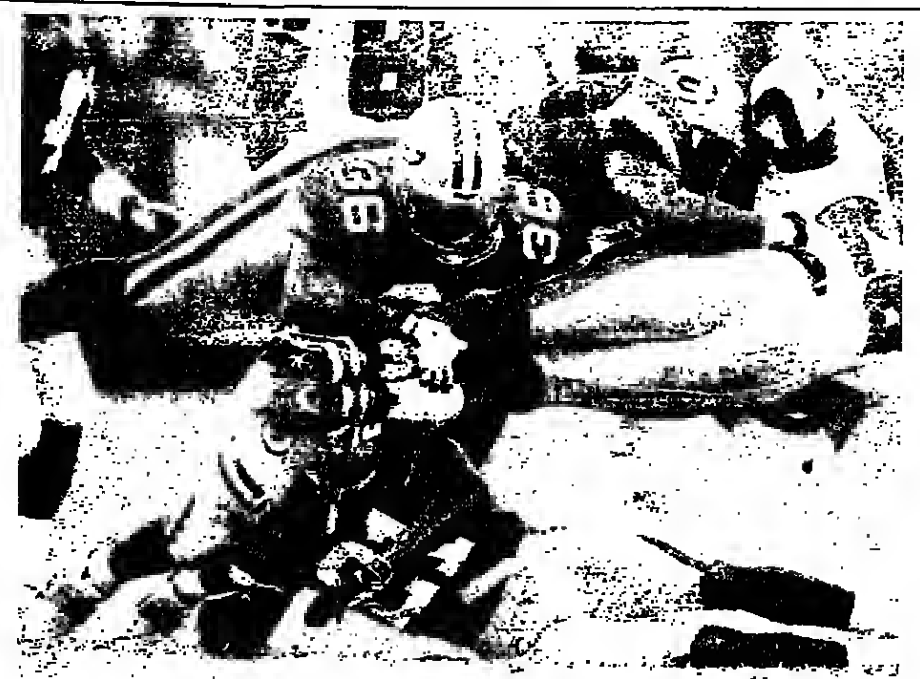
Javelin: WR 7.291 Points Jackie Joyner-Kersey (USA) Seoul 24 Sept 1988
6.787 Jackie Joyner-Kersey (USA)
6.787 Jackie Joyner-Kersey (USA)
6.787 Jackie Joyner-Kersey (USA)

Decathlon: WR 7,291 Points Jackie Joyner-Kersey (USA) Seoul 24 Sept 1988
6.787 Jackie Joyner-Kersey (USA)
6.787 Jackie Joyner-Kersey (USA)
6.787 Jackie Joyner-Kersey (USA)



Michael Johnson, 200 and 400 metres world champion from the United States (L) shares a laugh with U.S. 100 metres champion Maurice Greene. Athletes from 200 countries are taking part in the event (Reuters photo)

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL:634144 PHILADELPHIA "1" Steven Spielberg's THE LOST WORLD (JURASSIC PARK) Starring: Jeff Goldblum & Julian Moore Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	CINEMA TEL:634144 PHILADELPHIA "2" Whoopi Goldberg ... in EDDIE Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	CINEMA TEL:699238 PLAZA John Travolta...in PHENOMENON Shows: 12:30, 3:50, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	CINEMA TEL:677498 CONCORD CONCORD "1" Kevin Costner...in TIN CUP (3:30, 8:30) Demi Moore... in THE SCARLET LETTER (12:30, 6:15, 10:30) CONCORD "2" SPACEJAM Shows: 3:30, 6:00	TEL:625155 The satirical play AMN AI YA HO performance starts at 8:30 p.m. The theatre is closed every Friday. For reservations call 625155
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Green Bay Packers defensive players LeRoy Butler (36), Craig Newsome (21) and Brian Williams tackle New England Patriots running back Curtis Martin (28), after a seven yard rushing gain in the first quarter of their NFL pre-season game at Lambeau Field in Green Bay, Wisconsin. The two teams last played in Super Bowl XXXI (Reuters photo)

Dolan defies doctors orders and wins at U.S. nationals

NASHVILLE (R) — Olympic gold medalist Tom Dolan defied doctors orders by competing in the 200-metre individual medley at the U.S. swimming nationals Thursday and won the event, earning a place on the world championships team.

Dolan, an asthmatic, has had breathing problems since he arrived for the competition. He complained about stifling heat and harsh pool chemicals at the indoor facility and paid a price for his victory.

"I'm burning a little bit," Dolan said.

After winning in two minutes and 1.18 seconds, Dolan suffered an asthma attack and complained of dizziness and leg cramps. He needed a brown paper bag to aid his breathing after the race.

"It's tough when mentally you are there and physically you aren't," Dolan said.

The victory was Dolan's second national title of the meet and seventh in his career. He won the 400-meter individual medley earlier in the week, qualifying for both events at the World Championships in January.

In another final Thursday night, Olympic champion Brooke Bennett, the successor to retired U.S. distance queen Janet Evans, posted the world's fastest 800-metre freestyle this year to win the event.

The 17-year-old Bennett, who took 8:00 gold in Atlanta, won the event in 8:28.79, finishing nearly three body lengths ahead of runner-up Diana Munz.

Flowing in Evans's footsteps, Bennett also won the 1,500-meter freestyle earlier in the week.

Bill Pilczuk, 25, extended his career by winning the 50-metre freestyle in 22.45 seconds. Pilczuk said if he had not placed in the top three he was going to retire.

"I was ready to bang it up but this will keep me in it another three years," said Pilczuk, who took no breath during his 41-stroke race.

"So what if I turn blue and I'm killing 1,000 to 2,000 brain cells every 50 I swim. It's worth it."

Double Olympic silver medalist Gary Hall, with no Russians to push him, finished a disappointing fifth in the 50.

Amanda Adkins won the women's 200-meter backstroke in 2:12.62.

The meet is serving as U.S. team trials for the FINA World Championships in Perth, Australia, the Pan Pacific Championships in Fukuoka, Japan, and the World University Games in Sicily.

Jordan, Iran automatically qualify to Asian Basketball Championship

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan and Iran have automatically qualified to the 17th Asian Basketball Championship next month after their two other opponents in the qualifiers Iraq and Syria pulled out.

Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Iran were to contest the Aug. 9-14 West Asia pre-qualifiers in Tehran, Iran with the top two teams advancing to the Asian Championship in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia Sept. 11-19.

Sixteen teams will be playing in Riyadh. The top five from the last championship and the hosts qualify automatically and there will be two teams from each of the Asian Basketball Confederation's (ABC) five regional zones.

While the ABC had accepted Jordan's bid to host the four-team pre-qualifiers, the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) had conceded the bid to Iran last month saying it would "be financially more rewarding."

The JBF explained it was unlikely to cover the expenses of accommodating the teams would run up to JD 15,000. Iran on the other hand, was to cover the teams' travel expenses as well.

ABC Vice-Chairman Awwad Haddad said that up to seven teams might contest qualifiers in the future as the West Asia zone also includes Palestine, Yemen and Lebanon but the three have not paid their dues to the ABC and will therefore not compete.

Jordan's men's team which finished 6th in the recently concluded Pan-Arab Games will now prepare for the Riyadh Championship with minor changes on the lineup which will be coached by veteran player Imad Al Saeed who has left Austria where he resided to return to Jordan. He will be assisted by Amer Taleb following the dismissal of the Ukrainian coach.

With top players like Hilal Barakat, who was below form in the First Division championship, Naser Bushnaq, Marwan Ma'touq and Yousef Zaghloul, the line-up is mostly made up of younger players and includes Zeid Alkhas, Ma'an Odeh, Yousef Abu Bakr, Naser Alawneh, Faisal Nsour, Ayman Du'nis, Naser Bassam and Fadi Saqqa.

Ramez Hamimoudeh, Ghazi Ennabi, Nihad Madi and Ala' Bilbeisi will join the line-up after Mahmoud Sha'bun, Marwan Saeedi, Naser Bassam and Jan Sahlieh left for personal reasons.

Al Jeel promoted to basketball's 1st Division

By a Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Jeel beat Al Ashrafieh 68-40 at the weekend to win the 2nd Division Championship and clinch the sole qualifying berth to the First Division as of the 1998 season.

Al Jeel finished the competition with an unbeaten record throughout the preliminary and final rounds. They were runners-up in the Second

Division last year.

Al Wihdat and Al Raya were the other two teams in the final round after they got top two places in their respective groups, which included six teams each.

The 12 competing teams represented both Second and Third Division clubs playing in two groups. Group A included Al Jeel, Abu Nussair, Homsatmen, Al Wihdat and Shihan. Group B included Gazzet Hashem, Al Raya, Qamim, Ebbin, Sama and

Al Ashrafieh.

The First Division now includes Jazireh, Ahli, Orthodoxi, and Jalil who will be joined by Hussein and this year's newly promoted team. Al Watani and Yarmouk were relegated to the Second Division this year.

The Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) rules stipulate that Second Division teams be required to register under-16 teams as a prerequisite for participation as of the coming season.

Coetzer moves into semifinals at Carlsbad

CARLSBAD, California (R) — Amanda Coetzer, the compact South African with the potent forehand, posted a straight-sets victory over erratic Indonesian Yayuk Basuki at the Toshiba Tennis Classic Thursday to reach her ninth semifinal of the year.

The third-seeded Coetzer combined patience with power to beat Basuki 6-3 6-4 in a 77-minute quarter-final clash.

"I played the right shot at the right time. I didn't try to go for two much unless I came to the net and was forced to hit a good shot," the seventh-ranked Coetzer said.

Basuki, who was coming off Wednesday's upset of fifth seed Anke Huber, actually hit 16 more winners than Coetzer. But her 33 unforced errors — compared to just 11 for the South African — nullified all her good work.

"She can be a very dangerous but I was the steadier player today," said Coetzer, who awaits the winner of the late quarter-final between second seed Monica Seles and Natasha Zvereva of Belarus.

Seventh seed Conchita Martinez romped into the quarter-finals with a 46-minute, 6-1 6-0 pasting of Czech veteran Helena

Sukova.

"It was a great match for me. I was very aggressive and didn't let her play her game," said the 1994 Wimbledon champion.

Martinez will "not" have long to savour her lopsided victory. The win put the Spaniard directly in the path of World No. 1 Martina Hingis just four days after the Swiss teen crushed Martinez in a final at Palo Alto.

Coetzer used pivotal breaks in the seventh and ninth games to capture the opening set from Basuki.

With the South African up 5-4 in the second, Basuki self-destructed, producing

her seventh double fault at match point to put Coetzer into an increasingly familiar position — the final four.

Coetzer credited the obvious improvement to her play to her work with Australian coach Gavin Hopper, who helped turn her steady game into a dangerous one — one that accounted for two victories over Steffi Graf earlier this year.

"I really had to change my ground strokes. I had to get a weapon into my game," explained the 5-foot-2 (1.57 m) blonde.



Michael Chang

Ivanisevic, Muster bounced from Canadian Open

MONTREAL (R) — The Canadian Open lost its second and third seeds on Thursday when Goran Ivanisevic and Thomas Muster were upset in the third round.

Ivanisevic, who survived a three-set thriller Wednesday, was unable to repeat his second-round heroics and was bounced by 57th-ranked American Chris Woodruff 7-6 (8-6) 6-2.

Muster, who claims to be more comfortable on hard courts than clay these days, was nevertheless ushered out 6-2 2-6 6-4 by 50th-ranked Frenchman Fabrice Santoro.

American Alex O'Brien tried to roil the tournament of its top seed but Michael Chang recovered to post a 4-6 6-2 6-3 victory over the 15th seed that earned him a quarter-final meeting with eighth-seeded Dutchman Richard Krajicek.

"Playing Richard is never easy, particularly if his serve is on," Chang said. "The crucial part for me will be to break it."

Also moving into the quarters was fourth-seeded Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov, who downed 13th-seeded defending champion Wayne Ferreira of South Africa 7-5 6-3.

Kafelnikov next meets fifth seed Thomas Enqvist, a 6-3 6-2 winner over fellow Swede Jonas Bjorkman, the 12th seed.

Sixth-seeded French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten of Brazil and seventh-seeded Australian

Mark Philippoussis also advanced.

Woodruff, who next meets Philippoussis, found a big difference between the Ivanisevic who beat him in the third round of the Australian Open and the man he faced here.

"In Australia he hit something like 33 aces against me," said the 24-year-old from Knoxville, Tennessee, who faced just six aces Thursday. "I got a lot of second serves today."

The third-ranked Ivanisevic said he was out of shape after the three-week break he took near his home in split following his second-round loss at Wimbledon.

"I was lying on the beach and doing nothing, a nice life," he said. "For one set today I was running then in the second set I was breathing a little bit heavier than usual. I lost my concentration and didn't serve as well."

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5 bombs found in New York raid

3 Arabs arrested on suspicion they planned to bomb subway

NEW YORK (R) — Police Thursday seized five potentially deadly bombs and arrested three men of Middle Eastern origin in a dawn raid that apparently foiled a plot to bomb the New York city subway, officials said.

A complaint signed by an FBI agent and filed in U.S. District court in Brooklyn Thursday night named two of the suspects as Lafi Khalil and Ghazi Ibrahim Abu Mezer.

"Abu Mezer indicated that he was involved in making the bombs and provided information on how they could be detonated or disarmed," the complaint said. "He indicated that the bombs were targeted for detonation on the subway."

Two of the three men arrested were shot and wounded by police officers during the 4:40 a.m. raid on an apartment in the residential Park Slope neighbourhood of Brooklyn, authorities said.

Court papers said "one defendant attempted to grab an officer's weapon. The second moved toward a black bag, which later was found to contain an explosive device."

The charges included conspiracy to damage and destroy buildings and vehicles with explosives. In a brief hearing, the men were assigned public defenders who requested that the suspects not be interrogated.

Prosecutor Gordon Mehler told Judge Steven Gold, "both underwent surgery for multiple bullet wounds and as of late this afternoon were still comatose."

An Egyptian man living in the same apartment tipped police officers about the explosives Wednesday night, police sources said.

A Jordanian passport was found in the name of Mr. Mezer, authorities said. They said Canadian and immigration documents indicated he had sought asylum in the U.S. and had been arrested previously in Israel.

New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said that a plot to bomb subways was one of the possibilities being investigated by the joint terrorist task



A New York City police bomb squad van stands outside the Brooklyn apartment building where police found explosive devices in an early morning raid Thursday (Reuters photo)

force of local, state and Federal agencies.

"The devices were tested and a determination has been made that they are bombs," Mr. Giuliani said. "There are altogether five devices."

Police commissioner Howard Safir said the bombs could have killed or wounded people and damaged buildings if they had been detonated.

"Based on a computer analysis that we did of the

amount of explosives and the kind of device, they would kill someone up to 7.6 metres in a confined area and injure someone up to 30.5 metres in an outside area," Mr. Safir said.

Four of the devices were pipe bombs strapped together and contained black powder and switches, according to police sources. They said that

authorities were alerted Wednesday night when an

occupant of the apartment told a police officer people were "making bombs" there.

The FBI said "a massive investigation" was under way to find out exactly what the bombs were intended for, whether the suspects were acting as individuals or as a group and the possible motive.

Mr. Giuliani said there was no connection between the discovery of the bombs in a residential neighbourhood of

Relative of arrested suspects say men were not involved in terror

HEBRON (AP) — One of the men charged with conspiring to set off bombs in the New York city subway may have "gotten involved with the wrong people," his uncle said Friday.

Lafi Khalil, a former resident of the West Bank village Ajlul, outside Ramallah, and Ghazi Ibrahim Abu Mezer, formerly of the West Bank city of Hebron, were arrested Thursday in New York after police raided an apartment and seized five bombs.

Mr. Mezer, 23, and Mr. Khalil, 22, were shot and wounded during the raid. Police said they feared the men were about to detonate the bombs.

Relatives of both men told the Associated Press they had never been involved in political or militant Islamist groups.

Mr. Khalil "has only been in America for a very short period," his uncle Suhail Khalil, told the Associated Press in an interview in Ajlul.

"When he first went to Brooklyn his financial situation was not good. He may have gotten involved with the wrong people who took advantage of his needing a place to stay."

"His presence in the apartment that was raided is nothing but just being there and not knowing what was going on around him."

Suhail Khalil said his nephew moved to Aqaba, Jordan in November 1996 with his family. From there, he got a visa to Mexico, and then travelled to Los Angeles. A few months ago, he moved to Brooklyn.

Suhail Khalil said he had spoken to his nephew about three weeks ago. "He was fine, sounded happy," he said. "He told me he had plans to marry an Arab-American."

His nephew's dream was to live in the U.S. and get a Green Card, Suhail Khalil said.

"It's impossible in such a short time for him to be transformed so drastically and get involved with a political group that carried bombs," he said. "That is not realistic and I don't believe it."

Mr. Mezer's brother Nour also said he

was shocked to hear about his brother's arrest. Police said Mr. Mezer admitted the explosives were to be used in terrorist attacks on New York's subway system.

"It's impossible my brother would do something like that," Nour Abu Mezer said. "He's a non-violent person and a person who loves peace."

Nour said his brother left Hebron "to get away from the suffering of the people who are living here. He was looking for a good future for himself."

Ghazi went to Canada, planning to study business administration, his brother said. After studying English, he took a restaurant job to earn money. At some point, he moved to the U.S.

Just last week, he said, the family spoke to Ghazi on the phone, and Ghazi told them he had an American girlfriend.

"He said he was going to marry her and asked if she could come here and live in Hebron," Nour said.

Nour said his brother was not religious and had no connection with any political party. Neighbours also said he was not religious or political.

In 1990, he was arrested for allegedly throwing stones during the Palestinian uprising, or intifada, but was released after 15 days, his brother said.

"My brother would not harm the American people," Nour said. "He used to say that they are nice people and lovely hospitable people, and he was going to marry one of them. How he can harm them?"



Lafi Khalil, 22, from Ramallah in the West Bank (Reuters file photo)

Brooklyn and the double suicide bombing of a Jerusalem market Wednesday.

But he said that one of the men arrested "was yesterday heard expressing support for what happened in Israel." Islamist militants claimed responsibility for killing 13

people and wounding 170 others in Wednesday's attack.

FBI assistant director James Kallstrom said the probe was global. "As every four goes by we know more about this... but we're not going to talk about it," he said.

Mr. Kallstrom urged the media and the public "not to jump to conclusions" about the suspects.

Officers evacuated 90 residents, closed off a four-block area and diverted subway services during the raid and its aftermath.

Turkey's military expected to sack pro-Islamist officers

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's military leaders met here Friday to promote change round top army leadership and was expected to fire those who supported Islamists earlier this year.

The High Military Council, chaired by Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz, was to replace commanders in chief, decide on retirements and promote colonels, generals and admirals in the second largest armed forces in North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

The council said it will also

decide which officers should be dismissed for "lack of discipline," alluding to those who support or sympathise with Islamists.

The armed forces, which sees itself as the guardian of modern Turkey's secular principles, put pressure on the Islamist-led government of Necmettin Erbakan to resign last month after a year in power.

The routine meeting due to last until Monday takes place every year at the beginning of August and the appointments take effect Aug. 30 following

approval from the president. The High Military Council groups the prime minister, the defence minister and the commanders in chief of the armed forces and the police.

For the first time in the 73 years of the republic, the council met in 1996 under the chairmanship of an Islamist prime minister when Mr. Erbakan chaired the meeting.

After his resignation on June 18, Mr. Erbakan was replaced by a government formed by Mr. Yilmaz, a pro-secular politician who had the backing of the army.

Ryan named U.S. air force chief

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton Thursday named General Michael Ryan, commander of U.S. air forces in Europe, as air force chief of staff, succeeding General Ronald Fogleman, who resigned earlier this week.

Gen. Ryan, who also holds the post of Commander of NATO Air Forces in Central Europe based at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, was responsible for coordinating air strikes two years ago that helped drive warring parties in Bosnia to the negotiating table.

White House spokesman Mike McCurry told reporters Mr. Clinton had accepted the recommendation of Gen. Ryan by Defence Secretary William Cohen at a meeting Thursday morning.

Gen. Ryan's father also served in the same post. Mr. McCurry said: "He is, as near as we can tell, the first son to follow his father's footsteps as the chief of staff of one of the services. Mike's father John D. Ryan, served as chief of staff of the air force from 1961 to 1973."

Gen. Ryan is a former fighter pilot who flew combat missions over Vietnam.

Gen. Fogleman abruptly submitted his resignation Monday partly in anticipation of a decision by Mr. Cohen to hold another air force general. Terry Schwalier, responsible for failing to guard adequately against the truck bomb that killed 19 U.S. airmen in Saudi Arabia last year,

Israeli rabbis wonder if woman who hung Hebron poster is Jew

She hung posters on Sabbath but claims it was a sacred act

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli rabbis have cast doubt on whether a far-right extremist behind posters depicting the Muslim Prophet Mohammed as a pig can even claim to be a Jew, the weekly Kol Ha'ir reported Friday.

A religious court has met for a week to determine whether Tudiana Susskind, a 26-year-old immigrant from the former Soviet Union, is Jewish to allow her to marry a militant from the anti-Arab group Kach.

The court says it cannot understand why Susskind, who claims to be a practising Jew, could put up the insulting posters on Hebron storefronts on the Sabbath, the

Jewish holy day of rest.

"I am religious and drew the posters before the Sabbath" when all activity is forbidden, the newspaper quoted Susskind as saying.

"It was a sacred act," she said.

Susskind was arrested in the West Bank town of Hebron late last month and admitted putting up the offending posters on Arab storefronts.

She is being tried on four charges which carry a maximum 26-year jail sentence: racism, attacking religious values, supporting a terrorist organisation and attacking car drivers.

A court in Arab east Jerusalem has ordered psy-

chiatric tests to determine her mental state.

The posters showed an ink drawing of a pig — the filthiest of animals for both Muslims and Jews — wearing a Palestinian headscarf on its head with "Mohammed" written on it.

It sparked indignation throughout the Muslim World and clashes in Hebron, where 270 Palestinians were injured by Israeli troops.

The Islamist group Hamas said it carried out a double suicide bombing in a Jerusalem market Wednesday, which killed 13 Israelis, in revenge for the pig poster.

NASA dumps woman astronaut over size

KOROLYOV (R) — A senior NASA official Thursday defended the agency's abrupt decision to change astronauts for the next crew to work aboard the Mir space station, dumping a woman who had trained more than a year for the job.

"This has obviously been a very difficult decision," said Frank Culbertson, who heads NASA's joint missions with Russia.

At a news conference at Russian mission control, he said problems aboard Mir, which collided with its cargo resupply ship on June 25 and now runs on partial power, made it wise to send someone able to go on spacewalks needed to perform repairs.

He said Wendy Lawrence, who, Wednesday appeared eager to make the journey at a news conference hours before the announcement, was too small for the Russian Orlan space suit and had no spacewalk training, unlike her

replacement, David Wolf.

"She was not qualified to operate in the Orlan suit just because of size, and the other alternative of course was to evaluate the back up, David Wolf," Mr. Culbertson said.

Ms. Lawrence, who is 1.60 metres tall, will still fly on board the U.S. shuttle in mid-September. "She took it very calmly and professionally," he said.

The astronaut swap, which Mr. Culbertson apparently first discussed with his Russian counterpart Valery Rymyn, Monday took many Russian space officials by surprise.

"For us it was very unexpected," said Valery Lyndin, a spokesman for mission control outside Moscow.

"There were no objections to her from our side," he said. "We are only sorry she cannot fly, especially since she was so geared up to do such work."

director of Russia's Star City Cosmonaut Training Centre, said late Thursday he had not received any information on a change of crew.

"Yes, we are working with them [the astronauts], but we have not received any such decision yet," he told Reuters. "We have no official documents, decisions, nothing has been decided."

The next Russian crew aboard the 11-year-old Mir will attempt to make vital repairs to the space station, including regaining partial power from the damaged Spektr module by reattaching cables, a job planned for August 20.

Mr. Culbertson said the U.S. astronaut was likely to join the ship even if that repair — crucial to the future of the Mir which has suffered a series of its worst mishaps in the five weeks — was not a complete success.

Khobar bombing still a gray affair

WASHINGTON (R) — Reverberations from the bomb blast that smashed a U.S. air force housing block in Saudi Arabia last year are still being felt in Washington, cramping policy toward the region and causing the resignation of top officers this week.

On Thursday Brigadier General Terry Schwalier, the officer in charge of the Khobar Towers housing complex where 19 U.S. troops died in the June 25, 1996, attack, resigned after Defence Secretary William Cohen blamed him for security lapses.

Three days earlier Air Force Chief of Staff General Ronald Fogleman stepped down, making clear he could not accept anyone being singled out for blame.

Apart from such internal repercussions, the biggest question of all — who masterminded the truck bombing? — continues to overshadow Washington's troubled relations with the whole Gulf region.

The unfinished, Saudi-led, FBI-assisted investigation of the bombing has slowed any

U.S. overtures toward Iran, even with a relatively moderate cleric due to take office as president Sunday.

At bottom is the possibility that President Bill Clinton may feel compelled to retaliate militarily against any state he might conclude plotted the blast.

U.S. officials say they have not yet determined whether the blast was the work of home-grown Saudi dissidents or whether there was an international link.

But the suspicion of possible involvement by Iran — dubbed by the U.S. a "rogue nation" and a sponsor of "state terrorism" — has never been far from the minds of U.S. policy-makers and Pentagon war-planners.

Shortly after the blast, then-Defence Secretary William Perry said he anticipated finding an "international connection" and pointed a finger at Iran, which has denied responsibility.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright referred Tuesday while travelling in Singapore to the landslide

election in May of Mohammad Khatami as Iran's president as "interesting" and as "unexpected to those who follow [Iran] carefully."

But she added, "so far, we have not seen anything" to suggest Iran was willing to meet U.S. concerns about its policies such as ending alleged support for what Washington deems terrorism.

The investigation of the Khobar blast strained relations with Saudi Arabia, a U.S. oil supplier and its closest ally in the Gulf, over access to suspects and evidence.

In January, both attorney General Janet Reno and FBI Director Louis Freed broke with standard practice and sharply criticised the Saudis for failing to deliver on promises of full cooperation in the probe.

U.S. experts inside and outside the government have suggested that Saudi Arabia may be managing the evidence in a bid to forestall any U.S. strike against Iran that could backfire against the Saudi monarchy.

Prodigy aim to self-destruct — report

LONDON (AFP).

British techno rock band The Prodigy aim to self-destruct after being overtaken by their own success, it was reported Friday.

The four-piece group, whose aggressive, furious sound and provocative lyrics have propelled them to the top of the album charts in 22 countries including the U.S., never wanted such fame and fortune, their founder and songwriter told The Independent.

"We have to be something that people dislike," said Liam Howlett, who added he had deliberately set out to destroy the band's popularity with new single "Smack my bitch up," which also quotes Herman Goering.

insisting that the new single was not neo-Nazi or violent against women, he said.

"It's an answer to the people who thought that the 'firestarter' (a previous British number one) was about starting fires and the like."

They've got to get the iron in the songs."

Japanese court sides with woman

breaking engagement

TOKYO (AFP) —

Japanese court has sided with a 33-year-old woman who brokered off her engagement to a demanding fiancé who ordered her to cook breakfast and iron his trousers everyday while she continued to work.

Tokyo district court Thursday turned down a suit filed by the 35-year-old bureaucrat fiancé seeking a court order against the woman for \$38,000 in damages. "She had a good reason for shying away from the marriage," a judge said in the ruling.

According to local reports, the man demanded \$400 a month in financial support and tributes by keeping his fiancée as a civil servant, responsible for cooking the breakfast and cleaning his house and pressing his trousers daily. The couple held a wedding but the bride not officially registered married.

French beaches for the chic launch

war on dirty dogs

DEAUVILLE (AFP) — Authorities in Deauville have launched a war on dirty dogs, providing clean-up kits for pet owners in a bid to keep the beaches for the chic prime. The holiday destination for the well-heeled on the English Channel coast now provides distribute containing a paper bag and a spade. Discreet signs invite dog owners to "take the dog to the nearest bin."

everyone uses the bins and will all be able to walk heads high, without any risk," said Guillaume Henry, director of Deauville tourism office.

And the scheme is going down well on the famous beaches — the distribute need constant refilling as anyone who is anyone with a dog wants to be seen doing their bit for a clean-up effort, officials say.

Vogue goes to Russia

PARIS (AFP) — A Russian edition of Vogue magazine is to come out in spring 1998, announced Con Nast, publisher of the fashion industry bible. Russian Vogue will be put out in partnership with Moscow-based SK Communication International, which is best known for computer magazines. Conde Nast already publishes 15 magazines in the U.S., including Glamour and Vanity Fair, and more than 50 around the world, including Russian editions of Vogue. It has already announced plans for a Japanese Vogue, a South Korean Glamour and a South African House of Garden.

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